

'Despite being one of the most prolific and versatile scholars of the entire Safavid period, Fayd Kashani has not yet received the serious attention that is his due. It is therefore to be welcomed that his *al-Haqa'iq fi Mahasin al-Akhlaq*, a work displaying his expertise in ethics, Hadith, and a certain type of Sufism, is now available in English translation.'

HAMID ALGAR
Professor Emeritus of Persian & Islamic Studies
University of California, Berkeley

'This is a key work on ethics by an important Safavid-period scholar available for the first time in English in such a fine translation, together with such a useful introduction and notes.'

ANDREW NEWMAN
Reader in Islamic Studies & Persian
University of Edinburgh

Since its completion in the seventeenth century, this book has been lauded as a valuable textbook on Islamic spirituality and ethics as well as a spiritually enlightening read. This ground-breaking translation brings to light how Fayd Kashani engages with the Sunni Sufi tradition – particularly the ideas of al-Ghazzali – for the benefit of a Shi'a audience. In addition to presenting the inner mysteries of Islamic ritual practices, Fayd also explains the nature of the human character and how to cultivate, balance, and eliminate various traits.

Fayd Kashani centres his discussion on verses of the Qur'an and narrations (*hadiths*) from the Prophet Muhammad (S) and the twelve Imams (A). Serving as a useful reference work, this book includes the original Arabic narrations for the reader's convenience.

Fayd Kashani (1598-1680) was a renowned Iranian Islamic scholar who specialised in Hadith, jurisprudence, philosophy, and mysticism. He left behind over two hundred works, including *al-Wafi*, one of the most influential modern collections of Hadith.



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Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kashani
**Spiritual Mysteries &
Ethical Secrets**

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Fayd Kashani**

A Translation of
Al-Haqa'iq fi Mahasin al-Akhlaq

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A translation of
Al-Haqa'iq fi Mahasin al-Akhlaq

by
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❖ Introduction ❖

Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kashani

Muhammad ibn Shah Murtada ibn Shah Mahmud, known as Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kashani, (1598 CE / 1007 AH – 1680 CE / 1091 AH) was born in Kashan, Iran. After Mulla Sadra, Fayd Kashani is the most important mystic-philosopher of the School of Isfahan. Fayd's ancestors were renowned religious scholars and jurists for at least four hundred years prior to him. His father, Razi al-Din Shah Murtada (d. 1589-90/998), was a well-known jurist, theologian, and mystic-philosopher.

Fayd lost his father when he was two years old. As he grew up in Kashan, he studied the primary levels of religious studies with his uncles, including his maternal uncle, Hakim Nura (d. 1637-38/1047). Fayd relates that he studied those subjects known as the 'exoteric sciences' such as *hadith*, jurisprudence, and Qur'anic exegesis until he was twenty years of age, when, according to his own account, he first moved to Qum and then to Isfahan, one of the largest and most prestigious centres of Islamic studies in Iran. He moved to Isfahan in the hope of learning the esoteric and spiritual sciences, but could not

find a teacher capable of quenching his thirst for knowledge, until a few years later he met Mulla Sadra (d. 1640/1050), his perfect teacher and *pir* in Shiraz.¹

In Isfahan, Fayd studied the knowledge of *hadith* under Muhammad Taqi Majlisi, known as Majlisi the First (d. 1660/1070); jurisprudence and exegesis from Shaykh Baha'i (b. 1621-22/1031); and philosophy and mysticism from Mir Damad (d. 1631/1040) and Mir Findiriski (d. /1640/1050). When he came to know of Sayyid Majid Bahrani (d. 1618-19/1028), he moved to Shiraz to learn the science of *hadith*. In this city, he attended Mulla Sadra's lessons and studied mysticism and philosophy under him for over ten years, during which time he also married Sadra's daughter. Mulla Sadra accorded him the title 'Fayd', as he gave the title of 'Fayyad' to his other son-in-law, Mulla 'Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji.² Fayd Kashani and Fayyad Lahiji accompanied Mulla Sadra and spent seven years in isolation with him. Later, Mulla Sadra was forced to leave Isfahan and move to Kahak, a small village near Qum where he wrote his most important books including his magnum opus, *al-Asfar al-Arba'ah*.

Fayd eventually accompanied Mulla Sadra on his subsequent return to Isfahan. In spite of the political tensions between Mulla Sadra and the Safavid court, the governor of Shiraz invited him to establish his academic centre in that city, known as Madrasah Khan. Fayd accompanied his teacher to Shiraz and stayed there for about two years, before returning to his own town, Kashan; remaining there until the end of his life, with the exception of a few years during which he resided in Isfahan and served as the Friday prayer leader.³

Fayd received special juristic authorization (*ijazat naql*

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al-hadith) from Sayyid Ni‘mat Allah Jaza‘iri, Sayyid Majid Bahrani and Muhammad Taqi Majlisi in narrating *hadith*. He also gained scholarly authorization (*ijazah*) from Shaykh Baha‘i, Mulla Sadra, Muhammad ibn Hasan Zayn al-Din ‘Amili, and Mulla Khalil Qazvini.⁴

Fayd was an extremely prolific author and wrote about two hundred books and treatises. Hence, he has been highly venerated by his biographers for his comprehensive knowledge in various fields of Islamic sciences and his vast contribution to diverse fields. Asad Allah Tustari, the author of *Maqabis al-Nur*, describes Fayd as ‘the possessor of all *hadiths*, a very discerning researcher, sublime with great respect among people, pious, a great writer, and very erudite in many fields of Islamic knowledge’.⁵ *Riyad al-‘Ulama* and ‘*Amal al-‘Amil* describe Fayd thus: ‘He was a knowledgeable and consummate scholar, a philosopher, theologian, a *hadith* narrator, jurist, [and] a poet who had very great respect among his contemporaries.’⁶ Shaykh Aqa Buzurg Tehrani in his *Tabaqat A‘lam al-Shi‘ah* writes:

Fayd was the follower of Mulla Sadra’s school of philosophy. Like his teacher, Mulla Sadra, Fayd did not involve himself in politics. Except for the position of leading the Friday prayer, which was offered to him by the government, he never accepted any governmental position, even after being officially offered the position of Shaykh al-Islam.⁷

Fayd’s students

Fayd’s two sons, Muhammad – known as ‘Alam al-Huda (1619-20/1029 - 1703-04/1115) – and Ahmad, known as Mu‘in al-Din (1646-47/1056 - 1705-06/1117) – were both among his most famous students. They served as

assistants to their father in compiling his numerous works. The son of Fayd's brother, Muhammad Mu'min ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz and the son of Muhammad Mu'in, Shah Murtada, as well as his two sons, were also Fayd's students. Diya' al-Din Muhammad (d. 1637-38 CE/1047), a philosopher, mystic, and poet, was also taught by Fayd. However, without any doubt, Fayd's most important students were Mulla Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, known as 'the second Majlisi' (1616/1037 – 1698/1110); Sayyid Ni'mat Allah Jazai'ri (d. 1700-01/1112); and Qadi Sa'id Qumi (d. 1691-92/1103).

Fayd's works

Fayd compiled numerous works on philosophy, mysticism, morality, jurisprudence, Qur'anic commentary, *hadith*, *fiqh* and other Islamic subjects. These show his substantial contribution to and vast range of his research on Islam.⁸ Fayd's student, Ni'mat Allah Jaza'iri, confirms that Fayd left behind two hundred books and treatises.⁹ One year before his death, Fayd wrote a treatise about his works, giving brief information on the subject, length, and date on which he had finished each work. This treatise is published in the margin of *'Amal al-'Amil*.¹⁰ Some of Fayd's works are as follows:

1. *Mahajjat al-Bayda' fi Tahdhib al-Ihya'* (*The Bright Path in Refining the [Book] of al-Ihya'*). The book is based upon Ghazzali's *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*.
2. *Al-Haqa'iq* (*The Truths*). This work, the translation of which will follow, is a *hadith*-based discourse on morality. In the introduction, Fayd says that the book is an abridgment of *Mahajjat al-Bayda'*. More details

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will be given about this book in the following sections.

3. *Usul al-Ma'arif* (*The Principles of [Divine] Knowledge*). In this book, Fayd gives his perspectives on Islamic belief, using philosophical, mystical, and theological approaches.
4. *Al-Safi*, *al-Asfa*, and *al-Mussafa* (*The Healer*, *The Greatest Healer*, and *The Healed*). All three are commentaries on the Qur'an. *Al-Asfa* is an abridged version of *al-Safi*, and *al-Mussafa* is an abridged version of *al-Asfa*.
5. *Al-Wafi* (*The Sufficient*). The book consists of *hadiths* from all of the four major Shi'a Hadith collections (*al-kutub al-arba'ah*) along with Fayd's annotations on *hadiths* that require interpretation. It is published in fourteen large volumes.
6. *Al-Shafi* (*The Healer*). This book is an abridgment of *al-Wafi*.
7. *Abwab al-Jannah*, (*The Doors of Heaven*), a Persian treatise on the individual nature of the duty (*wujub al-'ayni*) of the Friday prayer.
8. *Mu'tasam al-Shi'ah fi Ahkam al-Shari'ah* (*Convincing Proofs of the Shi'a in the Shariah*). In this book the author discusses the most important jurisprudential subjects and the differences between Sunni and Shi'a views on each topic.
9. *Asrar al-Salat* (*The Secrets of Prayer*).
10. *Adhkar al-Taharat* (*Recommended Recitations for Ritual Purification*)
11. *Mafatih al-Shari'ah*. (*The Keys of the Shari'ah*). It consists of all chapters of Islamic law, including areas not previously discussed by other jurists.
12. *Al-Nukhbah fi Khulasat Ahkam al-Shari'ah al-*

Mutaharrah (A Choice Selection of the Decrees of the Pure Shari'ah). The book briefly discusses the main topics in Islamic law.

13. *Al-Usul al-Asliyyah al-Mustafad min al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah* (The Main Principles Derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah).
14. *Al-Haqq al-Mubin fi Kayfiyyat al-Taffaquh fi al-Din* (The Manifest Truth on the Manner of Understanding the Religion).
15. *Risalah fi al-Tafaquh wa Nafy al-Taqlid* (A Treatise on Understanding and Rejecting Imitation).
16. *Safinat al-Najat* (The Ship of Salvation). The book proves that the only sources of religious law are the Holy Qur'an and the narrations of the Prophet and Imams.
17. *Al-Nawadir* (The Rare Hadiths). A *hadith* collection in which the author collects those *hadiths*, which are not already mentioned in the four major Shi'a *hadith* collections.
18. *Muntakhab Rasai'l Ikhwan al-Safa* (Selected Treatises of the Brethren of Purity).
19. *Muntakhab Abwab Futuhat al-Makiyyah* (A Selection of Chapters from the Meccan Revelations), relating to the famous work by Ibn 'Arabi.
20. *Anwar al-Hikmah* (The Lights of Wisdom). This book is an abridgment of *Ilm al-Yaqin*, along with some new philosophical topics.
21. *Sharh al-Sadr* (The Opening of the Chest), an autobiographical sketch.
22. *Qurrat al-'Uyun* (The Brightness of the Eyes), on the levels of faith and believing in the unity of Allah.
23. *Sharai't al-Iman* (The Conditions of Faith).

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24. *Mir'at al-Akhirah (The Mirror of the Hereafter)*, about the Day of Resurrection.

Fayd's methodology

Fayd Kashani is probably the only Shi'a mystic and philosopher who was a specialist in the science of *hadith* (*muhaddith*) and a great compiler of *hadith*. His *al-Wafi* is considered, along with Majlisi's *Bihar al-Anwar*, as one of the four greatest modern *hadith* collections.¹¹ Through Fayd's commentary on traditions, it is possible to find out his method of narrating *hadith* and interpretation of the contents of *hadiths*. Fayd also wrote his Qur'anic exegesis mainly based on *hadith*. In using the *hadiths* to interpret the verses, he mainly follows the Akhbari method.¹² In general, one can say that in jurisprudence when he deals with *hadiths* on shariah law, he uses a moderate Akhbari method, but in his approach to *hadiths* about non-juristic subjects, such as theology, mysticism and philosophy, he uses his own rational method.

In his introduction to *al-Wafi*, Fayd supports the methodology of the Akhbaris¹³ and criticises the Usuli method of reasoning in religious law. Having suggested a division for religious knowledge, he maintains a few arguments against the authority of consensus (*ijma'*) and reason in shariah laws. He presented *hadiths* as the sole source in understanding Islamic law and morality. He also rejected the method which jurists commonly used to categorize kinds of *hadith*, such as authentic (*sahih*), good (*hasan*), reliable (*muwaththaq*) and weak (*da'if*). Fayd believed that the four main Shi'a *hadith* collections were sufficient for finding all Islamic legislation and that there was no need for any further sources. According to Fayd,

there was no need for any investigation in proving the validity of *hadiths* in the four collections, because the authors of those collections were erudite and reliable Shi'a scholars, so their narrations are also valid; however whenever the content of two *hadiths* are in conflict, rational criteria must be used in order to choose the one which is valid.¹⁴

Obviously Fayd's view in interpreting traditions with theological and philosophical content also differs from that of the more extreme Akhbaris. Since, as a central assertion, they reject the ability of human reason, these extreme Akhbaris reject any rational thinking or philosophical endeavour, which may lead us to an understanding contrary to the apparent and literal meaning of *hadiths*. Based on such an epistemological view, they believe that understanding the Qur'an and its interpretation lay exclusively in the hands of the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt, and that our duty consists only of consulting their *hadith*. According to them, the *hadith* is the only authoritative source, and since there is no right to use interpretive reasoning (*ijtihad*), one must refer to the texts of the traditions directly. In the case of two contradictory *hadiths* about a single topic, they only review and verify the chain of *hadiths*, rather than the rational analyses of their contents. Fayd's Akhbari affinity misled those unfamiliar with his thought. Hence, some have alleged that Fayd criticized philosophy and mysticism and regretted spending a certain period of his life on philosophy and mysticism. The truth is that although in his method of interpretation of the Qur'an and his approach to *hadith*, Fayd may come across as an anti-rationalist scholar, there is no doubt that until the

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end of his life, Fayd was loyal to the philosophical and mystical principles of his teacher, Mulla Sadra. Nevertheless, Fayd's method of interpretation of the Qur'anic verses and *hadiths* makes him a very controversial character. In order to shed light on this matter, we need to understand his style in reconciling reason and revelation more clearly.

Like Mulla Sadra, in different places, Fayd emphasises the unity of revelation (Qur'an and *hadith*), reason, and intuition. He stresses that they are all valid sources for finding the truth. In his introduction to '*Ayn al-Yaqin*, in explaining the purpose of compiling the book, he says:

I spent some parts of my life finding the secrets and mysterious inner meanings of the religion. What I have discussed in this book has been effused to me from the divine realm and the divine treasure. Therefore, I am certain of and have trust in what I have discussed in this book. In reality, what I have examined here are my religious beliefs, so I had great honour to describe them.¹⁵

He believes that one who appropriately uses mystical and philosophical knowledge and can combine them with an accurate understanding of the Qur'an and *hadith* will see no conflict between rational reasoning and revelation as two sources of Islamic knowledge. He says: 'I have not found any true mystical or philosophical issue, which I did not see as in harmony with the Qur'an and *hadith*.'¹⁶

Going further, Fayd maintains that any subject discussed by mystics and philosophers can be found in a more perfect and accurate manner in the teachings of the Imams, whether in explicit or in metaphorical language.¹⁷ Therefore, he believes that the knowledge we receive through revelation is superior to rational knowledge for the following reasons:

1. The views of the prophets and Imams are more accurate and comprehensive.
2. The knowledge we gain through revelation is more detailed. For instance, any information necessary in the field of law, including personal or social law, is discussed in the various chapters of Islamic law.
3. The prophets and Imams were more successful in communicating with ordinary people; therefore, they had a wider audience compared to mystics and philosophers. The reason for their success is that they applied concrete, well-illustrated metaphors to unseen, abstract, and metaphysical realities.

In different places, Fayd explains how human reason has a limited ability to understand various subjects such as metaphysical realities and the criteria of moral virtues and law.¹⁸ Nonetheless, Fayd is of the opinion that reason is the foundation in the construction of revelation, without which revelation cannot survive. According to Fayd, human beings alone can justify and attest to the authenticity of revelation by means of human reason.¹⁹ Reason is also the only tool for understanding the inner meanings of the divine religion, including the sacred book and traditions. Through revelation, which is transmitted knowledge (*'ulum al-naqliyyah*), we receive numerous propositions with different layers of meanings, which can be grasped only by intuition and rational efforts. In his *Basharat al-Shi'ah* and *Diya' al-Qalb*, Fayd adopts a mystical approach in explaining the two inward and outward aspects of religion and in explaining that human reason, as the inner aspect of the human being, can discover the inward meaning of the revelation.²⁰ In supporting mysticism and philosophy, Fayd maintains

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that the intuition and rational methods of thinking are systematised in the sciences of mysticism and philosophy.

Fayd and theologians

In his introduction to *'Ilm al-Yaqin*, Fayd offers several pieces of advice to seekers of knowledge and truth. One piece of advice he offers is that in studying religious knowledge, one should never use the dialectical method (*jadal*) of theologians, because their method leads to wrong conjectures. After strongly rejecting theologians, he then explains how they use fallacious arguments instead of a scholarly exploration of the content of the Qur'an and *hadith*. He refers to theologians as polemicists who have no success (*tawfiq*) in defending their creed or convincing the human consciousness. Fayd contends that theologians also talk about worthless issues, which are not agreeable with human innate. They mostly misuse their time by challenging each other with illogical arguments.²¹

Fayd and philosophers

Fayd is famous as a philosopher and left many outstanding philosophical works such as *'Ayn al-Yaqin*, *Usul al-Ma'arif*,²² and various treatises on philosophical topics. He refused to accept the traditional methods commonly used in Islamic theology; therefore his theological books such as *'Ilm al-Yaqin* are also written using a philosophical method. Fayd believed, nevertheless, that all the subjects discussed in ancient philosophies exist in revelation; so naturally if one has a correct understanding of revelation, one can benefit more extensively than philosophers.²³

Fayd criticises some of his contemporary philosophers, because of their deviation from true methods of philosophical thinking. He divides philosophers into two groups. The first consists of the earlier Muslim philosophers who were spiritually inclined ascetics and did not rely merely on rational demonstrations. The main source of their philosophical knowledge was the teachings of the divine prophets. Fayd approves of this group and expresses no objection against them. He identifies the second group as later Muslim philosophers who mixed up their philosophy with some erroneous philosophical principles that came from the mistranslation of Greek philosophy. He believes that many misrepresentations have taken place in the process of translation, to such an extent that the original philosophical principles have failed to be sufficiently transmitted to Muslim philosophers. The translators also added their own views and mixed philosophy with their false conceptions about metaphysical issues. The second group relies on such texts, whilst in their philosophical attempts they ignore the revelation as the most authentic source for metaphysics, morality, and theology. This is one of the reasons that their philosophical principles may not be compatible with revelation. Fayd clearly shows his opposition to this group and warns others not to spend their time studying their philosophy.²⁴ With this overview about these two groups of philosophers, Fayd generally hesitated to completely devote himself to philosophy; as compared to Mulla Sadra, he tended to rely less on this philosophy. He uses religious terms instead of philosophical or theological terms, even in his philosophical works; for instance when he discusses the

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issue of causality, he uses the Qur'anic term *sabab* instead of *'illah*.

Fayd and mystics

Fayd never showed any tendency toward a Sufi affiliation, and he did not establish any Sufi group, but without doubt, he was very interested in mysticism. He wrote outstanding works on this subject such as *Kalamat al-Maknunah* and *Qurrat al-'Uyun*. Therefore the assertion by Ma'sum 'Ali Shah Shirazi (d. 1926/1344) that Fayd, together with Baha' al-Din 'Amili, was a disciple of Nurbakhshi Shaykh Muhammad Mu'min Sabzavari²⁵ should be discounted, given the lack of confirmation in any source from the Safavid period. Indeed, Sayyid Ni'mat Allah Jaza'iri, Fayd's principal student, explicitly denied that his master was affiliated with any Sufi order.²⁶ It is not as an adherent of organised Sufism that Fayd should be regarded, but as an independent figure concerned with transmitting the Sufi legacy of the Sunni past, in an appropriately modified form, to Shi'ite Persia.²⁷

Despite Fayd's harsh criticism of the mystics who claimed miraculous powers and engaged in practices against the shariah such as dancing and reciting love poetry in a state of ecstasy; and in spite of the fact that he wrote a number of works to explain his own views and to condemn certain popular Sufi behaviour as excessive, a certain Sufi circle in Isfahan attempted to portray him as one of their number, so he was unable to fully escape the hostility of the jurists. His main opponent was Muhammad Sharif Qumi who condemned him in his *Tuhfat al-'Ushshaq*.²⁸

Like Mulla Sadra, Fayd interweaves philosophical and

mystical terminology in his mystical books and treatises. For instance in his *Kalimat Maknunah*, he describes the twelve Imams as equivalent to 'the universal intellect' (*al-'aql al-kull*). However, in his most important mystical book *Ilm al-Yaqin*, written in 1632/1042, Fayd warns that this book should be kept away from those who are not at the level of understanding delicate mystical subjects. In this book, he also criticises those mystics who have not been fed from the spiritual sources of the teachings of the Imams. In his *Bisharat al-Shi'ah*, Fayd says that the mystic, at any level of knowledge, is misled if he is not on the path of the Imams. Having quoted a sentence from Ibn 'Arabi in which he says 'I did not ask Allah to make me know the Imams; otherwise He would have done that', Fayd criticises Ibn 'Arabi and says this assertion is explicitly against a *hadith* from the Prophet saying 'whoever dies and has not [yet] known the Imam of his time, has died in the Era of Ignorance (*al-jahiliyyah*).²⁹

In spite of his criticism of Ibn 'Arabi, Fayd's longest parts of his mystical works are selections of texts from Ibn 'Arabi's *Futuh al-Makiyyah*. He also praised him in some of his books especially *'Ayn al-Yaqin*. In *Usul al-Ma'arif*, written in the last years of his life, he mentions Ibn 'Arabi's name with respect, thus proving that he maintained his sympathy for the mystical path until the end of his life. He believed that the sacred texts and sayings of the prophets and Imams had inner meanings, which could be grasped through mystical wayfaring and spiritual intuition.

In his introduction to *al-Safi*, Fayd says:

If someone claims that the Qur'an has only an exterior meaning, he speaks strictly from the self and errs grievously...the traditions and

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hadiths [are] the second of the two weighty things (*thaqalayn*) adhered to by the Prophet to interpret the Qur'an (the first weighty thing) and its inner meanings.³⁰

On the other hand he believes that the knowledge of the Qur'an is entirely with the Ahl al-Bayt and that they exclusively, are the ones who know the inward aspects (*ta'wil*) of the Qur'an. To understand their interpretations and understandings, a person must first purify his or her soul, which can be done through practising mystical and spiritual principles discussed on the path of mysticism.

Fayd and Mulla Sadra

Fayd was undoubtedly influenced by Mulla Sadra more than anyone else. In many of his works, he reverentially mentions Mulla Sadra as 'my teacher' (*ustaduna*), whilst praying for his health.³¹ Fayd is known as a philosopher of transcendent philosophy (*al-hikmat al-muta'aliyyah*). Nevertheless, there are differences between the disciple and the teacher, especially in methodology and in the issue of the relationship between revelation and human reason, although in several places, both philosophers maintain that they try to reconcile reason with revelation. They also maintain that there would be no conflict between reason and revelation if reason were properly used.³²

Mulla Sadra asserts that he is the first philosopher who has had success in explaining the revelation with philosophical and logical language. To carry out this task, whenever he presents his arguments on a philosophical topic, he quotes relevant Qur'anic verses and *hadiths* with his own interpretation and philosophical explanations. His commentary on the Shi'a *hadith* collection *Usul al-*

Kafi and his ten volume Qur'anic exegesis exhibit his stunning attempt. However, we can clearly see that Mulla Sadra relies on reason more than Fayd. The hallmark in Sadra's philosophical arguments is that he takes human reason as an independent source, whilst he uses the revelation as the premise in his philosophical arguments. In the process of philosophical demonstration and argument, he is mindful not to reach a conclusion that goes against the Qur'an and *hadith*. Having said this, we can say that Mulla Sadra is bolder than Fayd in using human reason and in his hermeneutics of the inner meanings of the sacred texts. Mulla Sadra's reasoning for adopting such a position is that there exist many controversial issues, which have two or more contradictory *hadiths*, or a verse in conflict with *hadith*. To prefer one group of those contradicted *hadiths* over other groups, or in order to choose one interpretation from a few possible apparent meanings of a verse or a *hadith*, one definitely needs to engage in rational analysis and philosophical speculation. For resolving such dilemmas via a complex procedure using both rational reasoning and intuition, Mulla Sadra wrote esoteric commentary to expose a meaning not understood from the surface meaning of a verse or *hadith*. In giving an illustration, he says that revelation is like the sun and human reason is like the eyes. Without the light of the sun, the eyes would be unable to see, and light without eyes is useless. Like the sun, revelation is useful if human beings use their reason. There are many people who do not use their reason and consequently have a very shallow understanding of the Qur'an and narrations.

In another example, he says that revelation is like the

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body, and reason is like the spirit. The body without its spirit has no movement or life and similarly the spirit without the body has no tools or facilities to act with.³³ From these examples, one can understand the very key position of reason in Mulla Sadra's transcendent philosophy and also the important situation of revelation in providing the material for the subject of philosophy, without which the philosophy would not have such rich ground.

Like his teacher, Fayd believes that the three main principles of religion must be proven by reason not shariah, because shariah is found to be authentic after these principles are proven by reason.³⁴ In his Arabic treatise *Diya' al-Qulub* (translated by himself as '*Aynih-yi Shahi*'),³⁵ Fayd asserts that revelation is the sole source of all knowledge of humanity, but if there had been no human reasoning (*ta'qqul*), man would not have become aware of such a rich source.³⁶ Confirming this assertion, a few pages later in the same treatise, he says that in order to find the metaphysical realities accurately, man needs to have perfect intellect (*al-'aql al-kamil*), and perfect intellect only belongs to the prophets and Imams.³⁷ Obviously Mulla Sadra could not agree with Fayd on this point. Mulla Sadra did not deem revelation as the sole source for metaphysical realities, as he believed that ordinary people could reach the intellectual stage at which they can connect to the spiritual realm and witness metaphysical realities. So, while Mulla Sadra sees reason as an independent source, which can discover metaphysical realities, Fayd considers human reason only as a tool to find out the inner meanings of the content of revelation. He explicitly maintains that his motivation in

studying philosophy and mysticism is to understand the language of the Qur'an and *hadith* in the best possible ways.³⁸ It must be noted that Mulla Sadra, like Fayd, believed that there are some areas which human reason cannot approach, such as many issues concerning details of the Hereafter and the Day of Resurrection, as well as numerous facts about the realm of immateriality.³⁹

In mysticism, we also see some disagreements between the disciple and the teacher. Fayd's biography indicates that, compared to Mulla Sadra, Fayd spent more time among people and had more social activities. Since Fayd held the title of Shaykh al-Islam for some time and was the leader of Friday prayers in Isfahan, which required him to interact with the masses, Fayd, more than his teacher, used the language of mysticism in his works like *Kalimat al-Maknunah*, *Qurrat al-'Uyun*, *Zad al-Musafir*, *Mishwaq* and even in his philosophical books such as *Usul al-Ma'arif*. In his works, Fayd mentioned the names of famous mystics with respect, including Ibn 'Arabi; however, more than his teacher, he openly criticises him.⁴⁰ In his *Asfar*, Mulla Sadra praises Ibn 'Arabi as 'the leader of intuitive people', while Fayd usually refers to him simply as 'one of the mystics' (*yiki az 'urafa'*).⁴¹

Having reviewed both philosophers, one can conclude that Fayd has taken the same position as his teacher on most philosophical, mystical, and theological issues, but usually differs from him in that he believes that rational thinking has a primary role. More than Mulla Sadra, he relies on *hadith* and the apparent meaning of the Qur'an. Fayd's reliance on *hadith* reached such an extent that he became known as an Akhbari among many Shi'a ulema. In spite of this difference, Fayd is undoubtedly one of the

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most important figures who promoted Mulla Sadra's thought. More than any other philosopher after Mulla Sadra, Fayd followed the method of his teacher in reconciling philosophy, mysticism, and revelation.

Fayd and Ghazzali

Fayd displayed the greatest interest in the works of the Sunni Sufi, Abu Hamid Ghazzali (1058-1111 CE). Although Fayd was mainly inspired by Mulla Sadra's philosophy, he was also been inspired by Ghazzali's ethical thought. This can easily be witnessed in Fayd's works especially *Mahajjat al-Bayda' fi Tahdhib al-Ihya'*, which is considered to be a Shi'a response to Ghazzali's magnum opus, *Ihya' al-'Ulum al-Din*. In the introduction to *Mahajjat al-Bayda'*, Fayd explains the reasons why he decided to write his book. After praising Ghazzali's efforts in integrating reason and religion and admitting the significance of *Ihya' al-'Ulum*, Fayd says that Ghazzali did not pay sufficient attention to the most fundamental source of knowledge in Islam, i.e. the *hadith* of the infallible Imams; so as Fayd saw it, Ghazzali had failed to present a comprehensive system of Islamic morality. After criticising Ghazzali for this shortcoming, he says that his attempt in *Mahajjat al-Bayda'* is to clean up inauthentic *hadith* from *Ihya' al-'Ulum*, and to modify and enrich its content by using the Shi'a Imams' traditions in the relevant topics.⁴² In addition to these major changes, in the second volume of *Mahajjat al-Bayda'*, he added a chapter with the title '*al-Akhlaq al-Imamat wa Adab al-Shi'ah*' ('The Ethics of the Imamate and the Customs of the Shi'a'). He also entirely removed the chapter dealing with *sama'* (a form of music and dance through which

some Sufis perform their spiritual ceremonies).

Mahajjat al-Bayda' is not the only work in which we can see traces of Ghazzali. *Al-Insaf al-Bayan al-Haqq wa al-Ittisaf*, a semi-autobiographical work, was also modelled on Ghazzali's *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*. Examining in turn the views of philosophers, the Sufis, the theologians, and the jurists, Fayd stresses the necessity of rejecting the opinion of each group whenever it fails to be compatible with the Qur'an and the traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt.⁴³

In *Ihya' al-'Ulum*, *Ma'arij al-Quds* and *Kimiya-yi Sa'adat*, Ghazzali talks about intuitional and rational knowledge and says that we can use intuitional knowledge only after we purify our heart – without which we would not be inspired by the inward meanings of revelation.⁴⁴ In *Ihya' al-'Ulum*, Ghazzali explains the differences between the prophets and philosophical knowledge; the former is effused from the divine realm to the human heart while the latter comes via bodily senses of objects in this material world. He did not reject the validity of philosophy as a source of knowledge; however for him, the clearer and more overwhelming knowledge came from revelation.⁴⁵ Ghazzali believed in compatibility among revelation, human reason, and intuition, but he emphasises the inadequacy of human reason in finding religious and metaphysical realities. He says if we use reason beyond its capacity, we will be misled and lose the Right Path. The function of human reason is merely to demonstrate the existence of Allah – not any other details of His essence and attributes – and also the necessity of prophecy and authenticity of their narrations and messages; however the remaining metaphysical

discussions, including understanding the inner meaning of the sacred texts, should rely on revelation.⁴⁶

Fayd generally agrees with Ghazzali's epistemological view about religious knowledge, except that he includes the knowledge received from the Imams' traditions. Fayd considers this source as a very rich legacy for Muslims, because the knowledge of the twelve infallible Imams is God-given knowledge (*'ilm al-ladduni*), effused to their souls through the active intellect (*'aql al-fa'al*).⁴⁷ Fayd confirms that any knowledge received from philosophical demonstration, mystical intuition, theological arguments, or juristic legal reasoning must aim to discover the meanings of their narrations. This entails that any knowledge gained through these sciences can be accepted, as long as it is not against the apparent meanings of the Qur'an and Sunnah.⁴⁸ This means that Fayd made use of the rational sciences in order to reach a deeper level of understanding of the sacred text, whilst Ghazzali openly rejected philosophical efforts and considered philosophy as a heresy in Islam.

Both Fayd and Ghazzali wrote voluminous books and treatises on Islamic ethics and spirituality. For instance, Fayd wrote *Zad al-Salik*, *Minhaj al-Najat*, and *Diya' al-Qalb*, and Ghazzali authored *Kimiya-yi Sa'adat*, *Mizan al-'Amal*, *Minhaj al-'Abidin*, and *al-Arba'in*. All of these titles are known as encyclopaedic works on Islamic morality and a reference for ethical and mystical doctrines for either Shi'a or Sunni scholars.

In spite of Fayd's spectacular contribution to philosophy, mysticism, ethics, exegesis, and the science of *hadith*, precious little research has been conducted on his thought, while the corpus of research (including books

and doctoral dissertations) on different aspects of Ghazzali, especially his ethical thought, is so voluminous that they cannot all be fully read by an individual in his or her lifetime. A comparative examination and assessment of the works of Fayd and Ghazzali will demonstrate the superiority and strength of Fayd's arguments in all fields.

There are major and fundamental differences between Fayd and Ghazzali. Nevertheless, there is still a general compatibility between them when they discuss common ethical issues and the practical disciplines of spiritual wayfaring. In order to understand Fayd's logic for compiling *Mahajjat* and *al-Haqa'iq*, we need to have an overview of the major differences. An overview of their different theological and philosophical principles will also be very useful in developing a clear understanding of Fayd's own philosophical arguments under each of the ethical topics in this book and in *Mahajjat al-Bayda'*. After reviewing their works, it is easy to sense that both thinkers were very religious, pious, and God-fearing. These characteristics affected their approach to Islamic principles. Basing their work on the teachings of the Qur'an and *hadith*, they were strongly committed to Islamic belief when discussing the existence and attributes of Allah, Allah's relationship with the universe, the issue of prophecy, resurrection, human freewill or predestination, what happens to man after death, and the relationship between this world and the Hereafter. According to both thinkers, knowledge and practice are two major ethical elements for perfecting the human soul. Other topics of interest include the role of habit and repetition of moral actions, finding the cause of moral evil (*raza'il al-akhlaqi*) in the human self, the necessity of

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avoiding of excess (*ifrat*) and extreme (*tafrit*) in order to achieve the stage of moral moderation (*i'tidal*) and justice, considering the individual situation of each person and their requirements in the process of purification of the soul in the spiritual journey, the necessity of following the shariah (its outward and inward aspects), and full submission to Allah. Finally, both thinkers emphasise the necessity of a people purifying their outer aspects by observing the religious rituals before purifying their inner aspects and the soul.

In spite of all the above-mentioned points on which they agreed, they had serious disagreements on the following issues:

1. Following the common tradition in Islamic morality, both thinkers concur on the definition of moral good and evil, moral virtues, and happiness. However, they disagree on rational moral good and evil (*husn wa al-qubh al-'aqli*), the issue of ontological good and evil, and the method of the justification of evil in the world when they predicate the imperfect creatures to Allah, as well as their interpretation of the theological principle of 'the best order of the world' (*nizam al-ahsan*).
2. In epistemology and in ethics, they both confirm the limitation of human reason in finding the criteria of the goodness and badness of moral principles, but Fayd, in contrast to Ghazzali, does not deny the ability of human reason to discover ethical criteria. Therefore, he is more rationalist than Ghazzali on this key ethical issue.
3. The two thinkers are worlds apart when they discuss the imamate and the Imams' hadiths as a source of

knowledge, as well as the authenticity of narrations of the companions of the Prophet. Fayd strongly criticizes Ghazzali for the criteria that he uses to present all companions as just and reliable sources. According to Fayd, not all companions of the Prophet possessed the same level of integrity and honesty in reporting their traditions. Their narrations must stand the same rigorous systematic process of evaluation established in *'ilm al-hadith* by the Shi'a ulema.

4. The conditions of a perfect guide (*murad/pir*) in spiritual journeys. As opposed to Ghazzali, Fayd believed that the perfect spiritual leaders are the infallible Shi'a Imams. Based on this fundamental perspective in *'irfan*, Fayd rejected Sufi spiritual orders and all Sunni mystics as perfect models for a wayfarer.

Al-Haqa'iq fi Mahasin al-Akhlaq

The book *al-Haqa'iq fi Mahasin al-Akhlaq* or *al-Haqa'iq fi Asrar al-Din* is one of Fayd Kashani's most significant books on ethics. Written in the last year of his life, when he was 83 years of age, it was the culmination of more than seven decades of research and contemplation by one of the luminaries of Muslim scholarship. *Al-Haqa'iq* is an original reference text on Islamic theoretical and practical ethics in which Fayd elaborates his ethical and mystical perspective. The book is a condensed version of Fayd's seminal work on morality, *Mahajjat al-Bayda'*. The said book, written in Arabic, has captured the imagination of successive generations of translators in Iran such as 'Shams al-Fusaha Mirza Muhammad Muhit Qumi, Shaykh Muhammad Baqir Sā'idi and the most recent translation

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by Rida Jalili. Consequently, there are quite a few versions of this work available in Farsi, pointing out the importance of this work for the Persianate Shi'a world.⁴⁹ The first translation into Persian was carried out in 1686-87/1098 by the grandson of Fayd's brother, Mawla Nur al-Din Muhammad ibn Murtada Kashani (known as Nur al-Din Akhbari). This book was published for the first time in 1387 AH (solar) along with annotations by 'Abdullah Ghaffari.⁵⁰

Al-Haqa'iq consists of six chapters devoted to major principles of Islamic morality and the process of perfection of the human soul. In these chapters Fayd introduces moral virtues and vices and examines the main obstacles for perfecting and refining the soul. He argues on the basis of the teachings of the Qur'an and *hadith*, while remaining committed to giving his own comprehensive interpretation of the subjects.

A proper 'understanding of the human soul and self-knowledge' (*ma'rifat al-nafs*) as the first step in knowing Allah and His attributes, serves as the foundation of understanding divine realities and ethics, because if man does not know his own spiritual nature, he cannot understand the distinctive knowledge which belongs to him either. Based on this fact, Fayd starts his book by examining the nature of human beings and the different faculties of the human soul. In this chapter he also examines the key role of self-knowledge and understanding religious knowledge and metaphysical realities in Islamic morality.

In the second chapter, Fayd examines moral vices, immediately followed in the third chapter by the sources and causes of moral vices. Here he says that worldly and

bodily desires are the source of deviation of the human soul toward moral decadence. The material world (*dunya*) has two different faces: one manifesting the ugliness, and the other the beauty of worldly life; one leading to the worst stage, and the other to the best station of human existence. One can be so deeply engaged in the world of matter to the extent that one thinks of nothing, but material gain for one's own sake. This for the most part leads people to seek their own personal profit and become lost in the process, to the extent that they ignore their fellow human beings. This finally creates moral corruption and destruction in the human soul, which leads to social corruption as well as oppression. Due to this aspect of worldly life, it is said that *dunya* is considered to be the origin and fount of all sorts of corruption and immorality.⁵¹ *Dunya* is also compared to frivolous or idle pleasure (*lahw* and *la'ib*).⁵² Seen from this specific angle, *dunya* can draw people into the pursuit of material gain and pleasure and divert them from transcendental pleasure, attaining eternal profit and happiness.⁵³ In this positive sense, the *dunya* is viewed as a bridge to the life of the Hereafter, to the *akhirah*. Moreover, it is in this world where Allah, as shown in the Qur'an, provides faithful believers with a goodly provision, by means of which they may seek their happiness in both this world and the next world. Although Fayd hints at this aspect of the *dunya*, he mainly focuses on the evil aspects of the *dunya*, which can be the source of all moral vices and a veil for wayfarers. After Fayd discusses this aspect of the world, he suggests appropriate observations and moral prerequisites through which one can protect the self from extreme worldly engagements.

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In Chapter Four, Fayd discusses major moral virtues, i.e. wisdom, courage, chastity, justice, and the secondary virtues derived from them. He also discusses the mechanism through which man can prepare his soul in order to gain moral virtues. In Chapter Five, Fayd with an ethical, rather than jurisprudential approach, examines different kinds of Islamic recommended rituals by which one can devote one's heart to worshipping Allah and maximize one's immersion in supplication and the glorification of Allah. Obviously these rituals are additional to the obligatory rituals discussed in jurisprudence: rituals such as intention (*niyyah*), inner and outer purification of man, different kinds of prayers and *dhikrs*, all helping wayfarers to tread on firmly and succeed on the path of *suluk*. In the last chapter, Fayd discusses a few key ethical concepts, such as repentance (*tawbah*) and its importance in Islamic morality, the process of self-examination (*muhasabah*) and meditation (*muraqabah*), reflecting and thinking, remembering death and the Day of Judgment.

The present book is the first English translation of Fayd's seminal work, *al-Haqa'iq*. The book is translated from Arabic and traditions are cited in original Arabic parallel to the English translation. We hope that the readers of this book will benefit from this model of presentation. As is customary with most classical works, in Fayd's own manuscript the traditions were cited without reference. Hence, the translators had to make great efforts to find the sources of *hadith*. Despite their immense efforts, there are still some *hadiths* whose sources could not be found in extant *hadith* collections. In those cases, an effort was made to refer at least to other

notable scholarly works (such as *tafsirs*), which cited those *hadiths*.

I feel obliged to acknowledge the huge efforts undertaken by the team that made this project a reality. The translation of *al-Haqa'iq* started a few years ago and the team of translators worked diligently to translate the book with its numerous subtle points and at times challenging sentence structure. Amina Inloes, Nazmina Virjee, and Muhammed Reza Tajri have done a fantastic, truly commendable job in completing this translation. Amina Inloes took on the responsibility of collating, cross checking and proofreading much of the entire translation as well. This work would not have seen the light of day, had it not been for her perseverance.

To facilitate ease of reading, the translators decided to include subtitles between different sections of a single chapter. The section breaks were designated by the author, but the subtitles were selected at the discretion of the translators and are not present in the original text.

For the sake of space, the decision was made not to include the Arabic text of the Qur'anic verses because they are readily available. However, it was decided to include the Arabic text of the *hadiths* because they are often less accessible. To this end, the helpful assistance of Kussay Al-Mousawi, Amina Inloes, and Narjis Baraka in integrating the Arabic text of the *hadiths* into the final manuscript must also be acknowledged.

A word of thanks goes to Amir Dastmalchian whose typesetting skills have always benefitted ICAS Press and to Hamid Tehrani who was consulted on the translation of Arabic terms and also assisted in the designing and printing of this book. I would also like to express my

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thanks to Professor Mohammad Saeed Bahmanpour for his support and scholarly advice – and, above all, his patience and helpfulness – throughout the process of translation and editing of the book. Finally, I would like to express my utmost thanks to the Muhammadi Trust of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for allowing us to reproduce some sections of William Chittick's beautiful translation of the whispered prayers in *al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah*, which they have published.

I pray that all those involved in this project will go on to achieve greater success in producing solid scholarly works and in presenting such classics to English readers around the globe.

SAYYED KHALIL TOUSSI
London, December 2011

Notes

¹ Fayd Kashani, *Dah Risalih, Risalat Sharh al-Sadr* (Khayyam Press, Tehran 1369 AH (solar)), p. 519.

² Muhammad 'Ali, Muddaris Khiyabani Tabrizi, *Rayhanat al-Adab fi Tarajim al-Ma'rufin bi Kuniyya Awbi al-Laqaab* (Tehran: Nashr Rudaki, 1369 AH (solar)), vol. 4, p. 370.

³ See Muhsin Amin, *Mustadrak A'yan al-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar al-Matbu'at, 1997), vol. 2, p. 308 and the section on the 11th century in Shaykh Aqa Buzurg Tehrani, *Tabaqat A'lam al-Shi'ah* (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Imam al-Sadiq, 1385), p. 491.

⁴ Muhammad Baqir Khwansari, *Rawdat al-Jannat* (Beirut: Dar al-Islamiyyah Press, 1411), vol. 6, p. 93.

⁵ See Amin, *Mustadrak A'yan al-Shi'ah*, vol. 2, p. 308.

⁶ Afandi Isfahani, *Riyad al-'Ulama'* (Qum: Nashr al-Islami Press, no/d), vol. 5, p. 181; Hurr al-'Amili, *Amal al-Amil* (Mashhad: Astan-i Quds Press), vol. 2, p. 305.

⁷ Rasul Jafariyan, 'Rasa'il Namaz Jum'ih dar 'Asr-i Safavi' (A Discussion of the Safavid-Period Friday Prayer Essays) in *Religion and*

Politics in the Safavid Period (in Persian) (Qum, 1370 AH (solar)/1991 CE), pp. 126-127, 134-135. See also Andrew Newman, 'Fayd al-Kashani and the Rejection of the Clergy/State Alliance: Friday Prayer as Politics in the Safavid Period' in Linda Walbridge (ed.), *The Most Learned of the Shi'a: The Institution of the Marja' Taqlid* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 34-52.

⁸ M. Tabrizi, *Rayhanat al-Adab* (Tehran: n.p., 1332 AH (solar)), vol. 4, p. 377.

⁹ See Khwansari, *Rawdat al-Jannat*, vol. 6, p. 93 and M. Mahdi, *Nujum al-Sama'* (no publication information), pp. 35, 120.

¹⁰ Isfahani, *Riyad al-'Ulama'* vol 5, p. 82; the 11th century in *Tabaqat A'lam al-Shi'ah* (no publication information), p. 491.

¹¹ The other two are *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah* by Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Hurr al-Amili (d. 1692/1104) and *Jawami' al-Kalim* by Muhammad ibn al-Sayyid Sharif al-Din, known as al-Sayyid Mirza al-Jaza'iri (a teacher of both Majlisi and Hurr al-'Amili).

¹² Akhbaris – as opposed to Usulis – are those who rely primarily on the *hadiths* as the main source of religious knowledge, asserting that we have enough traditions for all details of any single law, in contrast to Usulis who recognise that speculative reason plays a large role in developing religious law (*ijtihad*).

¹³ As long as the Imams were present and were able to wield authority, their utterances transmitted orally or in writing by their disciples formed the basis for Imami doctrine and law. With the occultation of the twelfth Imam (874/260), the rationalist current within Twelver Shi'ism gradually asserted itself vis-a-vis the traditionalist school. The leading Imami scholars such as Shaykh Mufid (d. 1022/413), Murtada (d. 1044/436) and Abu Ja'far Tusi (d. 1067/460) introduced a methodology of jurisprudence and rational theology. The readiness to allow a measure of speculative reasoning in religious law earned them the title of 'Usuli'. There are some reports about the appearance of opposition against rationalism as early as the sixth century, but doubtless, the first exponent of the full-fledged Akhbari position was Muhammad Amin Astarabadi (d. 1624/1033) whose teachings were adopted by Muhammad Taqi Majlisi (d. 1660/1070) and mostly endorsed by Fayd who concurrently inclined to both Sufism and philosophy. See E. Kohlberg, 'Akhbariya', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 1, pp. 716-718. See also W. Madelung, 'Akhbariyya', *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, vol. 12, pp. 56-57.

¹⁴ See the first and the second sections in the introduction to the first

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volume of *al-Wafī*.

¹⁵ Fayd Kashani, *ʿAyn al-Yaqin*, vol. 1, pp. 20-21.

¹⁶ Ibid., 26.

¹⁷ Ibid., 22.

¹⁸ Ibid., 44.

¹⁹ Ibid., 43.

²⁰ Mulla Sadra explores the same idea when he discusses two aspects of a human being, i.e. body and soul (see *Asfar*, vol. 8, p. 303).

²¹ Fayd Kashani, *ʿIlm al-Yaqin*, p. 3.

²² He wrote *Usul al-Maʿarif* on rational philosophy in 1679/1089; an edition was published, edited by S.J. Ashtiyani, in Mashhad in 1975/1354). He also wrote *al-Maʿarif* on mystical philosophy in 1679/1090.

²³ Fayd Kashani, *ʿAyn al-Yaqin*, p. 10.

²⁴ Fayd Kashani, *Rasaʿil Fayd, Risalat Basharat al-Shiʿa*, p. 141.

²⁵ M. Maʿsum Alishah, *Taraʿiq al-Haqaʿiq*, printed by Muhammad Jaffar Mahjub (Tehran: 1345 AH (solar)), vol. 2, p. 322; vol. 3, p. 215.

²⁶ Mudarris, *Rayhanat al-Adab* (Tabriz: n.p., n.d), vol. 4, p. 379.

²⁷ H. Algar, 'Fayz-e Kashani, Molla Mohsen Mohammad' in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 7, pp. 452-454.

²⁸ R. Jaʿfarian, 'Ruyari-yi Faqihan wa Sufiyan dar Dawra-yi Safavi', *Kayhan Andishih*, pp. 33, 111.

²⁹ M. Ismaʿil Khajuʿi, *Bishārāt al-Shiʿah* (Qum: Nash-i Kutub-i Dini, n.d.), p. 150.

³⁰ Fayd Kashani, *al-Safī fi Tafsir Kalam Allah al-Wafī*, ed. Husayn al-Aʿlami (Beirut: 1979).

³¹ For example see Fayd Kashani, *ʿAyn al-Yaqin*, pp. 65, 78, 85, 130, 137, 138, 140, 142, 149.

³² Sadra, *al-Mashaʿir*, p. 5.

³³ Sadra, *Sharh Usul al-Kafī*, vol. 1, p. 438.

³⁴ Fayd Kashani, *al-Wafī*, vol. 1, p. 14.

³⁵ This treatise has been translated by William C. Chittick. See 'Two Seventeenth-Century Persian Tracts on Kingship and Rulers' in *Authority and Political Culture in Shiʿism*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 269.

³⁶ Fayd Kashani, *Dah Risalih*, p. 165.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 169.

³⁸ Fayd Kashani, *ʿAyn al-Yaqin*, p. 5.

³⁹ Mulla Sadra, *al-ʿArshiyyah*, pp. 267-268.

⁴⁰ Fayd Kashani, *Dah Risalih*, p. 149.

- ⁴¹ Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 9, p. 45.
- ⁴² Fayd Kashani, *Mahajjat al-Bayda'*, vol. 1, pp. 1, 2.
- ⁴³ S. H. Nasr, 'The School of Isfahan' in M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy II* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1966), pp. 926-928.
- ⁴⁴ Ghazzali, *Ihya' al-Ulum*, vol. 3, pp. 40, 43.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 23.
- ⁴⁶ Ghazzali, *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*, p. 72. See Mulla Sadra's view on this issue in *Shawahid al-Rububiyah*, p. 413 and *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, p. 149.
- ⁴⁷ Fayd Kashani, *'Ayn al-Yaqin*, p. 4.
- ⁴⁸ See Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 14, 21, 22; Fayd Kashani, *Qurrat al-'Uyun*, pp. 425, 426; and Fayd Kashani, *Dah Risalih*, p. 188.
- ⁴⁹ Tehran: Lahut Press, 1389 (solar).
- ⁵⁰ Tehran: Madrasah-yi 'Ali Shahid Mutahhari, 1388 AH (solar)
- ⁵¹ Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1983, 3rd revised ed.), vol. 7, p. 59.
- ⁵² Qur'an, 47:36.
- ⁵³ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 1, p. 134, no. 30.

Preface

In the Name of Allah, the all-Beneficent, the all-Merciful.

All praise be to Allah who illumined our hearts with the light of *iman*¹
And acquainted us with the secrets of the *hadith* and Qur'an.
Peace be upon Muhammad, the Master of the Messengers
And upon his good and pure family, the Infallible Successors.

– *This pauper before Allah, Muhammad ibn Murtada, known as Muhsin
(may Allah help him!)*

With the help of Allah, in this book, I will relate some of the secrets of religion. Through them, whoever has a heart or a heedful ear will ascend and behold the steps to certainty.

I have taken these from the Book of Allah, the Exalted; the Sunnah of the Master of the Messengers; and the narrations of the immaculate Imams. I have also added what I found appropriate in the scholars' books, especially *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din (The Revival of the Religious Sciences)* by Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Ghazzali al-Tusi, in a fit explanation of its principles and meanings. I have carefully selected its precious gems without including anything unnecessary.

I have named it *al-Haqa'iq (The Secrets)* and have arranged it in six treatises, each of which consists of various books, divided into chapters – and Allah is my aid.

Notes

- ¹ *Iman* is the Arabic word for 'faith'.

FIRST TREATISE

Concerning the Principles of Faith

In it are three books...

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BOOK 1

❖ Knowledge ❖

Introduction

Know that Allah created the celestial and earthly realms for the sake of knowledge. The best way to come nearer to Allah is through knowledge. Allah – glory be to Him – says:

Allah is He Who created seven heavens, and of the earth the like of them; the decree continues to descend among them, that you may know that Allah has power over all things and that Allah indeed encompasses all things in [His] knowledge. (65:12)

Allah bears witness that there is no god except Him – and [so do] the angels and those who possess knowledge. (3:18)

Only Allah's servants with knowledge fear Him. (35:28)

Are those who know equal to those who do not know? (39:9)

And We draw these parables for humankind, but no one grasps them except those who have knowledge. (29:43)

The Prophet (S) said,

The scholars are the heirs of the prophets.¹

العلماء ورثة الانبياء.

It is also narrated that the Prophet (S) said,

'O Allah, have mercy on my successors.'

He was asked, 'Who are your successors, O Prophet of Allah?'

He replied, 'Those who will come after me and narrate my sayings and Sunnah.'²

وفي الحديث النبوي (ص): اللهم ارحم خلفائي، قيل له يا رسول الله ومن خلفائك؟ قال: الذين يأتون بعدي يروون حديثي وسنتي.

Imam 'Ali (A) said,

The perfection of religion is the quest for knowledge and acting upon it. Seeking knowledge is more incumbent upon you than seeking wealth, since wealth is guaranteed and pre-ordained by the just Lord who distributes it among you. He has guaranteed it and will make it suffice you, whereas knowledge is only deposited with those who are worthy of it, and you have been commanded to seek it from those who possess it. So seek it.³

كمال الدين طلب العلم والعمل به، وإن طلب العلم أوجب عليكم من طلب المال، إن المال مقسوم مضمون لكم، قد قسمه عادل بينكم وقد ضمنه وسيفي لكم، والعلم مخزون عند أهله وقد أمرتم بطلبه من أهله فاطلبوه.

It is narrated from Imam al-Sajjad (A),

If people knew what was in the quest for knowledge, they would engage in that quest by any means, be it at the risk of their lives or by delving into the depths of the oceans.⁴

لو يعلم الناس ما في طلب العلم لطلبوه ولو بسفك المهج وخوض اللجج.

And from al-Baqir (A),

A scholar who benefits others with his knowledge is better than seventy thousand worshippers.⁵

عالم ينتفع بعمله أفضل من سبعين ألف عابد.

And from al-Sadiq (A),

Whoever knows something good is rewarded like one who acts on it.⁶

من علم خيراً فله مثل أجر من عمل به.

Imam al-Rida (A) relates via his forefathers that the

Prophet (S) said,

The quest for knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim, so seek knowledge from its sources and grasp it from its custodians. For learning something for the sake of Allah is a good deed, seeking it is worship, recollecting it is glorification of Allah, acting in accordance with it is *jihad*, teaching it to one who does not know it is charity, and endowing it to others who are worthy of it is an act of nearness to Allah the Exalted. This is because it is the yardstick for knowing the lawful versus the unlawful, the lamp on the path to Paradise, an intimate friend in the darkness, a companion in a foreign land and in loneliness, a confidante in his solitude, a guide in both ease and hardship, a weapon against enemies and an adornment among friends. Through knowledge, Allah the Exalted raises whole communities and makes them leaders of goodness, whereby their traditions are adopted, their deeds imitated, and their opinions taken on board; the angels seek out their company and wish to befriend them, to touch them with their wings, and to bless them. Every creature seeks forgiveness on their behalf, from the fishes in the sea, to the reptiles on the land, to the beasts of prey and beasts of burden on the earth.

Knowledge enlivens hearts from ignorance. It is vision's light in the darkness, and the body's strength against weakness. Through it, the servants of Allah can attain the stations of the virtuous, join the gatherings of the pious, and reach a high rank in both this world and the next. Recollecting it is equal in status to fasting, and teaching it is equal in status to standing lengthily in prayer. By virtue of it, the Lord is obeyed and worshipped, family ties are maintained, and the lawful is distinguished from the prohibited. Knowledge is first, and action follows. The fortunate are inspired by it while the wretched are deprived of it. So, glad tidings be to the one whom Allah has not deprived of this fortune.⁷

طلب العلم فريضة على كل مسلم، فاطلبوا العلم في مظانّه، واقتبسوه من أهله، فإن تعلّمه لله حسنة، وطلبه عبادة والمذاكرة به تسبيح، والعمل به جهاد، وتعليمه من لا يعلمه صدقة، وبذله لاهله قرينة الى الله تعالى، لانه معالم الحلال والحرام، ومنار سبل الجنة، والمؤنس في الوحشة، والصاحب في الغربة والوحدة واخّذت في الخلوة، و الدليل على السراء والضراء، والسلاح على

الاعداء، والزين عند الاخلاء. يرفع الله به اقواماً فيجعلهم في الخير قادة يُقتبس آثارهم ويُهتدى بفعالهم وينتهى الى آرائهم، وترغب الملائكة في خلّتهم وباجنتها تمسحهم وفي صلاتها تبارك عليهم. يستغفر لهم كل رطب ويابس، حتى حيتان البحر وهوامه، وسباع البر وانعامه.

ان العلم حياة القلوب من الجهل، وضياء الابصار من الظلمة، وقوة الابدان من الضعف. يبلغ بالعيد منازل الاخيار، ومجالس الابرار، والدرجات العلى في الآخرة والاولى. الذكر فيه يعدل بالصيام، ومدارسته بالقيام. به يطاع الرب ويعبد، وبه توصل الارحام، ويعرف الحلال والحرام. العلم امام العمل، والعمل تابعه. يلهمه السعداء، ويحرمه الاشقياء. فطوبى لمن لم يحرمه الله تعالى منه حظه.

The narrations on the virtues and merits of knowledge are too numerous to be counted!

The virtue of knowledge

Know that precious and valuable things fall into three categories: things sought for their intrinsic value, things sought for their usefulness, and things sought for both their intrinsic value and usefulness. Intrinsically valuable things are more excellent and nobler than merely useful things; but things which are both intrinsically valuable and useful are even worthier.

An example of something useful is currency. Physically, the coins are worthless pieces of metal. Had Allah not designated them as a means of fulfilling our needs, they would be as worthless as stones. An example of something intrinsically valuable is pleasure. And an example of something intrinsically valuable as well as useful is health. Health is valuable because it keeps us safe from ailments; but also, because of health, we can walk and carry out our daily activities.

With this in mind, if you look at knowledge, you will see it is pleasurable in and of itself, and so it is

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intrinsically valuable. You will find it a means of reaching happiness in this world and the next, and a means of attaining nearness to Allah – neither of which can be attained without knowledge. It is the most important thing for attaining eternal happiness and nearness to Allah: the most excellent thing is that which leads to these two goals, and these two goals can only be reached through knowledge and action. But since action can only be mastered through knowledge of action, the root of happiness in this world and the next is knowledge. It is, therefore, the most valuable thing – how could it be otherwise?

A thing's worth is also recognised by the quality of its fruit. The fruit of knowledge is nearness to the Lord of the universe and entrance into the angelic realms near the heavenly hosts. This is in the Hereafter; in this world, it affords honour, respect, dignity, influence over rulers, and naturally commands respect. This is why even the ignorant and uncouth among the tribesmen and desert dwellers are naturally drawn to honouring their *shaykhs*, because of their expertise due to their vast knowledge and experience. In fact, even animals naturally look up to humans because they sense that humans are more perfect than them. This is the absolute virtue of knowledge.

Different types of knowledge vary in their ranking based on their importance, and of course, their merits vary accordingly too. The best of them is the inner recognition of Allah the Exalted with real conviction, which is the root of all established knowledge.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

If people knew the virtue of recognition of Allah the Exalted, they would never gaze at the splendour and blessings of the life of this

world that Allah has granted His enemies. The world would mean less to them than the dust under their feet, and they would take pleasure in knowing Allah the Exalted. They would savour that with the delight of one who had never left the heavenly gardens and were still with the friends of Allah. The inner recognition of Allah is an intimate companion in times of desolation, a friend in times of lonesomeness, a light in times of darkness, a source of strength in times of weakness, and a cure for all ailments.

Before you, there were a people who were killed, burned, and cut with saws until the earth itself felt constricted as a result. Nothing could aid them in their predicament, since the sole reason for it was hatred towards them and thirst for blood-revenge. They were persecuted only because they had faith in Allah, the Almighty, the Praiseworthy. So ask your Lord about their status, and bear patiently the trials of your days so you may fathom their struggle.⁸

لو يعلم الناس ما في فضل معرفة الله تعالى ما ملّوا أعينهم الى ما متّع به الأعداء من زهرة الحياة الدنيا ونعيمها، وكانت دنياهم أقلّ عندهم مما يطئون به بأرجلهم، ولتعموا بمعرفة الله تعالى وتلذّذوا بما تلذّذ من لم يزل في روضات الجنان مع اولياء الله، إنّ معرفة الله تعالى أنس من كل وحشة، و صاحب من كل وحدة، ونور من كل ظلمة، وقوّة من كل ضعف، و شفاء من كل سقم.

ثم قال: قد كان قبلكم قوم يقتلون ويحرقون وينشرون بالناشير، وتضيق عليهم الأرض برحبها فما يردّهم عمّا هم عليه شيء ثمّ هم فيه غير ترة وتروا من فعل ذلك بهم ولا أذى، بما نقموا منهم إلا أن يؤمنوا بالله العزيز الحميد، فاسألوا ربكم درجاتهم، واصبروا على نوائب دهركم تدركوا سعيهم.

Two types of knowledge

There are two types of knowledge: worldly and spiritual. Worldly knowledge is that which is concerned with deriving benefit from this world, such as medicine and accounting. Spiritual knowledge is divided into two types: knowledge which is sought for its own sake, and knowledge which is sought in order to be put into practice in order to attain the first type of spiritual knowledge. If

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spiritual knowledge is sought for worldly reasons, then it becomes worldly knowledge.

All spiritual knowledge is commendable, whereas worldly knowledge has both commended as well as condemned types.

Spiritual knowledge that is sought for its own sake is a light that is manifested in the heart when it is purified and cleansed of all its negative attributes. With that light, one is able to perceive matters that one had previously only heard by name and imagined as having only general and unclear significance.

This is shown to him until he attains true inner recognition (*ma'rifah*) of Allah's Essence: His complete attributes as much as possible; His acts; and His wisdom in creating this world and the Hereafter and arranging them in that particular order. He also attains inner knowledge about prophethood and the Prophet, the meaning of imamate and the Imam, the meaning of revelation and inspiration, the meaning of the angels and the demons, and how Satan antagonises humans. He attains inner knowledge of how the angels appeared before the prophets, how revelation came to the Prophet, how angels spoke to the Imam, and knowledge of the dominions of the higher realms and the earth. He is given knowledge of the heart, how angelic and demonic forces clash in it, and the difference between angelic and demonic insinuations. He is given knowledge of Heaven, Hell, punishment in the grave, the bridge (*sirat*) in the Hereafter, the Balance, intercession, and the Final Reckoning. He understands the meaning of the words of Allah (Exalted and Glorified be He):

Today your soul suffices as your own reckoner. (17:14)

But the abode of the Hereafter is indeed Life, had they only known.
(29:64)

He understands what it means to meet Allah and look at His Noble Face, and to be near Him. He understands what it means to attain perpetual bliss through communion with the heavenly hosts and association with the angels and the prophets. He understands the vast difference between the ranks occupied by the dwellers of Paradise, such that some of them see others like twinkling stars in the midst of the sky – and he understands other things which are too numerous to be elaborated here.

Although acknowledging these matters are principles of faith, people fall into different categories. Some believe all of the above are only metaphors, and that the rewards which He has prepared for His righteous servants have never been seen by any eyes, heard by any ears, or grasped by anyone's imagination. They believe that earthly creatures can only comprehend the descriptions (*al-sifat wa al-asma'*) of Heaven. Others believe that some of these descriptions are metaphorical while others are literal and reflect reality. Still others believe that the pinnacle of knowing Allah is acknowledging our inability to know Him. Some people make great claims to the knowledge of Allah, while others believe Him to be what the common people generally consider Him to be – namely, that He is omniscient, omnipotent, all-Hearing, all-Seeing, and the One who speaks and wills.

By 'knowledge sought for its own sake', we mean knowledge which removes ambiguity from these matters until the truth is manifest as if seen with one's own eyes, leaving no doubt whatsoever. On their own, human beings could do this – had not rust, resulting from the

filth and impurities of this world, clouded the mirror of their hearts. These mirrors must, therefore, be polished of these impurities that veil them from knowing Allah, His attributes, and His acts. They are purified by restraining the base desires, and by emulating the prophets and the Imams (A) in all ways. To the extent that the heart is polished and made to face the truth, His realities will radiate therein to the same extent.

This can only be done through learning, guidance, awe of Allah, God-consciousness, sagacity, and intelligence. These sciences cannot be found in books, and those whom Allah has blessed with this knowledge will only discuss them among their own circle of worthy people in their discourses and secret communication.

This hidden knowledge is what the Prophet (S) meant when he said,

There is a branch of knowledge that resembles the unseen, which no one can fathom except those who possess real knowledge of Allah. Whenever they speak of it, only those who have misconceptions about Allah fail to recognise it, and only those who know Allah can absorb it. Therefore, do not despise a learned man whom Allah has endowed with this knowledge since Allah Himself did not despise him when He imparted it to him.⁹

إن من العلم كهية المكنون لا يعلمه إلا أهل المعرفة بالله، فإذا نطقوا به لم يجهله إلا أهل الاغترار بالله عز وجل ولم يتحمّله إلا أهل الاعتراف بالله، فلا تحقروا عالماً أتاح الله علماً فان الله عز وجل لم يحقره إذ أتاح إياه.

It is narrated that Imam 'Ali (A) said,

One of Allah's most beloved servants is the one whom Allah has empowered against his own base self, such that he is saddened inside and enveloped by fear, and the lamp of guidance burns bright in his heart...He has cast off the apparel of desires and rid himself of all worries, except the one that he is left with. He no longer follows

blindly, nor keeps company with those who are slaves to their whims. He has become a key to the doors of guidance, and a lock to the doors of destruction. He has perceived the path and now treads it. He has recognized his lighthouse and has crossed the deep seas. He has grasped the strongest of bonds and the firmest of ropes. The strength of his conviction is like the light of the sun....¹⁰

إنَّ من أحبَّ عباد الله إليه عبدا أعانه الله في نفسه فاستشعر الحزن، وتجليب الخوف، فزهر مصباح الهدى في قلبه إلى أن قال: قد خلع سراويل الشهوات وتخلّى من الهموم إلا همّاً واحداً إنفرد به، فخرج من صفة العمي ومشاركة أهل الهوى وصار من مفاتيح أبواب الهدى ومغاليق أبواب الردى، وقد أبصر طريقه، وسلك سبيله، وعرف مناره، وقطع غماره، واستمسك من العرى بأوثقها، ومن الحبال بأمتنها، فهو من اليقين على مثل ضوء الشمس.



He has revived his heart and killed his base self, such that his body has become thin and his bulk has become light. A bright luminescence shines for him and shows him the way. Doors are opened for him, leading him to the door of safety and the place of his eternal abode. His feet, as a result of the calmness of his body, are steadfast and firm in safety and comfort, because he kept his heart working hard and pleased his Lord.¹¹

قد أحيا قلبه، وأمات نفسه، حتى دقَّ جليله، ولطَّفَ غليظه، وبرق له لامع كثير البرق، فأبان له الطريق، وسلك به السبيل، وتدافعت الأبواب إلى باب السلامة ودار الإقامة، وثبت رجلاه لطمأنينة بدنه في قرار الأمن والراحة بما استعمل قلبه، وأرضى ربّه.



I have absorbed hidden knowledge such that were I to disclose it, you would shake violently like a rope thrown down in a deep well.¹²

اندججت على مكنون علم لو بُحْتُ به لاضطربتم اضطراب الأرشية في الطوى البعيدة.



I learnt a thousand chapters of knowledge from the Messenger of Allah (S); and from every chapter, a thousand more were opened to me.¹³

تعلمت من رسول الله (ص) ألف باب من العلم ففُتِحَ لي من كل باب ألف باب.

Kumayl ibn Ziyad al-Nakha'i asked Imam 'Ali (A) about reality, to which he replied,

'Why do you want to know about reality?'

Kumayl asked, 'Am I not the keeper of your secret?'

He replied, 'Of course, but that which overflows from me is bound to seep into you.' Then he answered his question.¹⁴

وسأله كميل بن زياد النخعي عن الحقيقة فقال (ع): مالك والحقيقة؟ قال: أولست صاحب سرّك؟ قال: بلى ولكن يرشح عليك ما يطفح مني ثم أجابه عما سأل.

In another narration, Kumayl said,

He took me by the hand to the graveyard. When he had passed the graveyard and entered the desert, he let out a deep sigh, and said, 'O Kumayl ibn Ziyad, these hearts are containers, the best of which preserve their contents the most, so preserve well what I am about to tell you.'

People are of three types. One is the divine scholar; then, the seeker of knowledge on the path to deliverance; and lastly the savage mobs who run after every caller, swaying in the direction of every wind. They seek no enlightenment from the radiance of knowledge, nor do they seek refuge in any reliable support...Right here is a storehouse of knowledge (he pointed to his chest) – how I wish I could find someone to bear it! I could find someone to dictate it to, but he would not be trustworthy. He would exploit religion as a tool for worldly gains, and by virtue of Allah's favours on him, he would dominate the people; and by the proofs shown to him, he would subjugate His friends. Or he might be obedient to the bearers of truth, but devoid of insight or wisdom, willing to entertain doubts in his heart at their very onset, remaining neither here nor there. Or he would be motivated by pleasures, easily led away by desires, intent on hoarding and amassing wealth. None of these have any regard for religion whatsoever, and the best similitude of them is as wandering cattle. This is how knowledge dies with the death of its bearers.

O Allah, indeed the earth is never devoid of those who uphold Allah's proof, be it openly and publicly, or fearfully and secretly, so that Allah's proofs and manifest signs never cease. How many are these and where are they? By Allah, they are few in number but highly esteemed by Allah. Through them He protects his proofs and his signs until they entrust them in turn to others like themselves, and sow the seeds thereof in the hearts of those who are like them... They like what the ignorant find strange. They live in this world physically, though their spirits are attached to the higher realms. These are the vicegerents of Allah on His earth and the callers to His religion. O how I yearn to see them!¹⁵

أخذ بيدي فاخرجني إلى الجبان فلما أصبح تنفس الصعداء ثم قال لي: يا كميل بن زياد إن هذه القلوب أوعية فخيرها أوعاها فاحفظ عني ما أقول لك. الناس ثلاثة: فعالم رباني، ومتعلم على سبيل النجاة، وهمج رعاع أتباع كل ناعق، يميلون مع كل ريح، لم يستضيئوا بنور العلم، ولم يلجئوا إلى ركن وثيق إلى أن قال: هاه، إن هاهنا لعلماء جفا، وأشار إلى صدره، لو أصبت له حملة بلى أصيب لقنا غير مأمون عليه، مستعملا آلة الدين للدنيا، ومستظهرا بنعم الله على عباده وبحججه على أوليائه، أو منقادا لحملة الحق لا بصيرة له في أحنائه، ينقدح الشك في قلبه لأول عارض من شبهة ألا لا ذا ولا ذاك. أو منهوما باللذة سلس القياد للشهوة أو مغرى بالجمع والادخار، ليسا من رعاة الدين في شيء أقرب شيها بهما الانعام السائمة، كذلك يموت العلم بموت حامله.

اللهم بلى لا تخلوا الأرض من قائم لله بحجة اما ظاهرا مشهورا، أو خائفا مغمورا لنلا تبطل حجج الله وبيئاته، وكم ذا وأين أولئك، أولئك هم والله الأقلون عددا، الأعظمون قدرا، هم يحفظ الله حججه، وبيئاته حتى يودعوها نظراءهم ويزرعوها في قلوب اشباههم، همج هم العلم على حقيقة البصيرة، وياشروا روح اليقين، واستلانوا ما استوعره المترفون، وأنسوا بما استوحش منه الجاهلون، وصحبوا الدنيا بآبدان أرواحها معلقة باخل الأعلى، أولئك خلفاء الله في أرضه والدعاة إلى دينه. آه آه شوقا إلى رؤيتهم.

It is narrated that Imam al-Sajjad (A) said,

By Allah, if Abu Dharr knew what was contained in Salman's heart, he would have killed him – and the Prophet (S) had made them brothers. So what about others? Indeed the knowledge of those who know is difficult and complicated, which none can bear save a

favoured angel, a divine messenger, or a believing servant whose heart Allah has tested for faith. Salman became one of 'those who know' because he is one of us, the Holy Household (*ahl al-bayt*), and this is the reason for his inclusion in 'the knowledgeable'.¹⁶

والله لو علم أبو ذر ما في قلب سلمان لقتله ولقد آخا رسول الله (ص) بينهما فما ظنكم بسائر الخلق، إن علم العلماء صعب مستصعب لا يحتمله [يتمله خ] إلا ملك مقرب أو نبي مرسل أو عبيد مؤمن امتحن الله قلبه للايمان قال: وإنما صار سلمان من العلماء لأنه امرء من أهل البيت فلذلك نسبته إلى العلماء.

By 'household', he meant 'the people of monotheism (*tawhid*), knowledge, inner knowledge, and wisdom', and not 'household' as in 'a household of women, children, and relatives'. It is also narrated from the Prophet (S) that 'Salman is one of us, the Holy Household,'¹⁷ and, 'If Abu Dharr knew the wisdom contained in Salman's bosom, he would have charged him with infidelity' (or, according to another narration, 'killed him').¹⁸

سلمان من أهل البيت.

لو علم أبو ذر ما في بطن سلمان من الحكمة لكفروه (وفي رواية لقتله).

These verses of poetry are attributed to al-Sajjad (A),

Indeed, I hide the gems of my knowledge
Lest the ignorant see the truth and test us.

Abu al-Hasan had passed this on to Husayn
And had entrusted it to Hasan before him.

Mayhaps, if I divulged this precious jewel of knowledge,
I would be accused of being an idol-worshipper.

The Muslims would permit the shedding of my blood,
Believing the ugliness they were bringing to be beautiful.¹⁹

إني لا كنتم من علمي جواهره كيلا يرى الحق ذو جهل فيفتننا
وقد تقدم في هذا أبو حسن إلى الحسين ووصى قبله الحسن
يا رُبَّ جوهر علمٍ لو أبوح به لقليل لي أنت ممن يعبد الوثنا
ولاستحل رجال مسلمون دمي يرون أقبح ما يأتونه حسنا

It is narrated that Imam al-Baqir (A) said,
People – all of them – are animals, apart from a few believers.²⁰

الناس كلهم بهائم إلا قليل من المؤمنين.

Allah's words in the Qur'an confirm this:

Do you suppose that most of them listen or apply reason? They are just like cattle; rather they are farther astray. (25:44)

It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (A),

Our command is a hidden secret, veiled by the covenant, and whoever divulges it will be disgraced by Allah.²¹

إن أمرنا سر مستور في سر مقنّع بالميثاق من هتكه أذله الله.



Indeed our command is a hidden secret within a secret, a well-kept vaulted secret, a secret that would avail no other, a secret masked by a secret.²²

إن أمرنا سر مستور في سر وسر مستسر وسر لا يفيدُه إلا سر وسر على سر مقنّع بسر.



It is the truth, the absolute truth. It is the manifest yet the innermost thing within the manifest, and the inner of the inward too. It is the secret, the vaulted secret, masked by a secret.²³

هو الحق وحق الحق وهو الظاهر وباطن الظاهر وباطن الباطن، وهو السر وسر المستسر وسر مقنّع بالسر.

Indicating the obligation of guarding this secret, he said,

Dissimulation (*taqiyyah*) is my way and the way of my forefathers,

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and whoever has no dissimulation has no faith.²⁴

التَّقِيَّةُ دِينِي وَدِينُ آبَائِي، فَمَنْ لَا تَقِيَّةَ لَهُ لَا دِينَ لَهُ.

He also said,

Associate with people using what they know, and leave aside what they deny. Don't put yourselves or us under attack. Our command is difficult and complicated, and none can bear it save an angel near to Allah, a prophet sent, or a believing servant [of Allah] whose heart Allah has tested for faith.²⁵

خَالَطُوا النَّاسَ بِمَا يَعْرِفُونَ وَدَعَوْهُمْ بِمَا يَنْكُرُونَ، وَلَا تَحْمِلُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ وَعَلَيْنَا، إِنْ أَمَرْنَا صَعِبَ مُسْتَصْعَبٌ لَا يَحْتَمِلُهُ إِلَّا مَلَكٌ مَقْرَبٌ أَوْ نَبِيٌّ مَرْسَلٌ أَوْ مُؤْمِنٌ امْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قَلْبَهُ لِلْإِيمَانِ.

Practical spiritual knowledge

Knowledge that is sought to be put into practice – in order to attain, through it, the spiritual knowledge which is sought for its own sake – can itself be divided into two types: ethics and practical laws. Ethics is knowledge of the states of the heart. The praiseworthy states of the heart include patience, gratitude, fear, hope, submission to Allah's will, satisfaction with Allah's will, asceticism, God-consciousness, contentment, generosity, forgiveness, goodness towards others, holding good opinions of people, amicableness, trustworthiness, honesty, sincerity, and recognition of Allah's grace in all situations. Knowledge of these states, their definitions, the ways they are acquired, their fruits, their signs, and how to strengthen them in case of deficiency are all part of spiritual knowledge.

The blameworthy states of the heart include fear of poverty, discontentment with fate, malice, jealousy, deception, seeking to be elevated, love of praise, desiring

immortality to enjoy this world, pride, showing off, anger, scorn, enmity, hatred, avarice, miserliness, lust, extravagance, frivolity, recklessness, exalting the rich, belittling the poor, arrogance, vanity, rivalry, boasting, acting above the law, meddling in what is not one's concern, love of excessive speaking, bragging, adulation, self-conceit, preoccupation with other people's flaws instead of one's own, losing sorrow or fear of Allah from one's heart, extreme self-pity when wronged, half-hearted support for the truth, professing brotherhood publicly while harbouring enmity privately, feeling immune from Allah's design or from losing what He has given, demanding obedience, trickery, treachery, deception, false hopes, cruelty, exulting in this world and grief at losing it, being delighted by people's company and depressed when they leave (except for the ones who aid a person in religion), rudeness, fickleness, haste, shamelessness, and lack of compassion.

These and similar conditions of the heart are a seedbed for immorality and prohibited acts. Their opposites – namely good moral virtues – are the fountainhead of acts of obedience and nearness to Allah.

Knowledge of these traits – their definitions, their realities, their causes, their fruits and their cures – are all part of spiritual knowledge, which all must acquire if they can. Those who cannot acquire it completely should acquire it to the best of their ability, for Allah does not burden anyone with more than their capacity.

Knowledge of the practical laws is knowledge of how to perform the legislated acts of worship, such as purification, ritual prayer, charity, fasting, hajj, jihad, enjoining good, and forbidding evil – as well as

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knowledge of their respective merits. It also includes the knowledge of specific laws concerning what is lawful and what is prohibited, as well as personal and commercial laws, such as buying and selling, usury, loans, credit, leases, commercial enterprise, sharecropping, pawns and mortgages, liability, surety, trusts, deposits, assurances, treaties, gifts and endowments, marriage, separation, inheritance, fixed penal laws, judicial corporal punishments, retaliation, blood money, and rites of the dead. It also includes knowledge of the etiquette of eating, drinking, clothing, housing, greeting, hospitality, adornment, speech, brotherhood, social etiquette, travel, rights, and more.

This too is obligatory to know, in accordance with one's individual requirements and capacity, and a communal obligation (*wujub kifa'i*, or a religious obligation binding on the entire community until someone performs it) for extrapolating legal edicts and judgments.

The way to acquire these two types of knowledge – namely, ethics and practical laws – is what we will discuss here, so listen carefully. And follow the path of those who are guided, not the whims of those who do not know.

Jurisprudence

Know that each of the three types of knowledge of the Hereafter is referred to as the knowledge of religion, or jurisprudence, and learning them is referred to as the study of religion. Allah, Mighty and Exalted, says:

But why should not there go forth a group from each of their sections to become learned in religion, and to warn their people when they return to them, so that they may beware? (9:122)

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said to his companions,

It is incumbent upon you to become learned in the religion of Allah. Do not remain ignorant like the desert nomads, for, on the Day of Resurrection, Allah will not even look at or purify the deeds of someone who does not study the religion of Allah.²⁶

عليكم بالتفقه في دين الله، ولا تكونوا أعراباً فإنه من لم يتفقه في دين الله لم ينظر الله إليه يوم القيامة ولم يُزَلَّ له عملاً.



Would that [someone would] strike the heads of my companions with whips to make them learn what is permissible (*halal*) and impermissible (*haram*)!²⁷

ليت السياط على رؤوس أصحابي حتى يتفقهوا في الحلال والحرام.



The sign of a liar is that he will be able to tell you news of the sky, the earth, the east and the west, but if you ask him about what Allah has made permissible (*halal*) or impermissible (*haram*), he will have no clue.²⁸

إن آية الكذاب بأن يخبرك بخبر السماء والأرض والشرق والمغرب، فإذا سألته عن حرام الله وحلاله لم يكن عنده شيء.

Learning about religion, therefore, refers to gaining insight into religious matters – spiritual or practical, exoteric or esoteric, connected to ritual worship or practical issues – and whether it is done because it is obligatory, recommended, or simply for the sake of polite refinement. Now our goal is to explain how to acquire this knowledge, for people differ on this and have led the masses in circles. With Allah's help, we will uncover the face of truth, such that no doubt or ambiguity remains.

At the time of the Prophet (S), people learned from him whatever had been revealed. After him, however, they

split into two groups. One group believed in forged consensus in determining the Imam. They followed metaphorical verses (along with the definitive verses) in the tenets of faith, sowing dissention and diverting people from the true meanings. They decided on the outcome and then invented the evidence. These are the companions of Abu Bakr ibn Abi Qahafah al-Taymi and 'Umar ibn al-Khattab al-'Adwi, along with those who trod in their footsteps, who supported *ijtihad* and personal opinion in every matter. Their opinions keep changing and their scholars differ with one another since they follow nothing but conjecture and that which leads souls astray. They do nothing but guess.

They are of two types: the *mujtahid* who derives the legal rulings, and the *muqallid*, who follows their edicts.

Their *mujtahid* acquires religious learning through exerting every effort to arrive at an uncertainty regarding the religious matters which people need guidance in – beliefs or practices. They arrive at their suppositions by way of laws that they have invented and principles that they have fabricated to assist them in extrapolating rulings from the metaphorical verses of the Qur'an.

Their followers acquire religious learning by taking (often via others) whatever the *mujtahid* deduced using his opinion.

The other group believed that Allah appointed the Imam. They restricted themselves to following the decisive verses of the Qur'an in beliefs and practices, basing everything on divine revelation, and exercising caution about anything that might lead to misguidance or error. These are the companions of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A), who only express opinions

in accordance with the divine texts. They refrain from whatever their Imam, who obtained his knowledge from Allah and His Messenger, has prohibited, and they obey every single thing that Allah has commanded, since Allah says in the Qur'an:

Ask the People of the Reminder if you do not know. (16:43)

Obey Allah and obey the Prophet and those vested with authority among you. (4:59)

The kind of *ijtihad* you see some of our recent scholars undertaking – their meticulous recording of principles and delving deep into subordinate matters – is due to an uncertainty circulating among them which was sown by their opponents, as we clarified in our earlier manuscripts. Possibly, they are doing this because they think it has some benefit, and they therefore can cultivate a common ground with their opponents, lest their opponents claim that we do not concern ourselves with the finer details of knowledge. However, this became a point of uncertainty which circulated among their successors until it pervaded their circles (for the two reasons just mentioned).

However, this should not be taken as a vilification of their high status, nor as a reason to classify them with the first group (of *mujtahids*) – far be they from that! All the rights of the respected and saved group are due to them for their excellent efforts in the propagation of the true creed and in removing the need to dissimulate one's faith among many peoples and in many countries. May Allah reward them abundantly on our behalf, and may He resurrect them with the Imams on the Day of Judgment.

The second group refers matters of religious study back to their Imam whenever possible. If not, they also fall into two categories: the enlightened and the one seeking

enlightenment; or, in other words, the jurispudent and the one studying religion; or, to put it yet another way, the specialist and the layman. If you prefer, you may call them *mujtahid* and *muqallid*, for the words are indisputable.

Among them, the enlightened one is the one with understanding, acumen, a holy capacity, asceticism, and piety. He acquires religious learning through following the verses of the Holy Qur'an which have an obvious meaning (*muhkamat*), the Sunnah, and the narrations from the Holy Household (A) which also have an obvious meaning. Using these, he tries to understand what is necessary to believe and do, using his sound intellect and solid understanding. He is aided by his mind – clarified by his righteous deeds – and his heart, enlightened with his pure and refined character.

The nobility of the intellect is obvious, for, without it, the divine law would never be known. It is as if the intellect is the divine law internalized, and, outside, the divine law is the intellect externalized. They support and corroborate each other so much that it is as if they are one and the same.

It is narrated,

The servant [of Allah] does not fulfil his obligations to Allah until he understands Him, and all the worshippers together do not attain the excellence of worship which a person with intellect attains.²⁹

وما أدى العبد فرائض الله حتى عقل عنه، ولا بلغ جميع العابدين في فضل عبادتهم ما بلغ العاقل.

Do not assume, however, that the elite believers have come to believe in Allah and the Last Day through philosophical debates or theological proofs and disputes – nay! They have come to know Allah in the manner which

we have spoken of – through the cooperation of the intellect and the divine law, and the fusion of the inner light with the light from outside, just as the eye sees by combining the light of the eye with the rays of the sun. Similarly, alluding to the intellect, Allah the Mighty and Glorious says, ‘whose oil almost lights up, though fire should not touch it. Light upon light’ (24:35). This refers to the light of the intellect and the divine law. A narration says,

Knowledge is not excessive study; instead, it is a light which Allah casts into the heart of whoever He wills.³⁰

ليس العلم بكثرة التعلم إنما هو نور يقذفه الله في قلب من يريد الله أن يهديه.

So when a ruling is clarified to this enlightened scholar, and no doubt whatsoever remains to trouble him, he adopts it and thanks Allah. But if he remains unsure about something – and all knowledge is with Allah and the divinely appointed Imams – he acts cautiously (*ihitiyat*) and does not issue a firm or conclusive verdict.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

It is wrong for you to uphold something that you have not heard from us.³¹

أما إنه شرٌّ عليكم أن تقولوا بشيء ما لم تسمعه منا.

He also said,

‘All knowledge that has not come from this house is baseless’ – and pointed to his house.³²

كلّ علم لا يخرج من هذا البيت فهو باطل، وأشار بيده إلى بيته.

He does not impulsively contrive a general principle, unchecked and unheard of, lest it be controversial, such as either advocating or absolutely rejecting the author-

itativeness of the solitary report (*khavar al-wahid*).³³ The point of contention regarding it has never been precisely defined and will never be defined within the precepts termed 'the principles of jurisprudence' (*usul al-fiqh*). Rather, each individual problem should be dealt with separately, and a reliable specific narration should be sought out, as well as a reliable contextual study regarding it. The metaphorical verses cannot be taken as decisive, and can only be used figuratively. How could it be permissible to take them as decisive when Allah has decreed these verses 'metaphorical'? They cannot be interpreted allegorically or categorised haphazardly – as those with deviated hearts do.

This is because Allah the Glorious has decreed matters to be of three types, as mentioned by the Prophet,

Obviously correct and self-evident matters which must be followed; obviously erroneous matters which must be avoided; and the grey areas. Their verdict lies with Allah and those who are well-grounded in knowledge and know the true interpretation.³⁴

أمرٌ بين رُشدِه فَيَتَّبِعُ وَيَبِينُ غَيِّهَ فَيَجْتَنِبُ، وَمُتَشَابِهَاتٍ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ يُرَدُّ حُكْمُهَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَإِلَى الرَّاكِبِينَ
فِي الْعِلْمِ الْعَالِينَ بِتَأْوِيلِهِ.

So how can we seek to make everything black and white when Allah has decreed three categories, since an ambiguous matter has a ruling and wisdom before Allah, and Allah tests people through it. Similarly, contradictory reports cannot both be taken to be correct at the same time, unless the Imams specified a further detail which would indicate the preference of one over the other. This is how the enlightened one saves himself from controversy, contradiction, expressing his own opinion, and haphazard judgment, for he neither exercises his own

personal judgment, nor his opinion, nor that of others by consensus, but only refers to narrations, the contextual study of *hadith*, and directly hearing and receiving the traditions.

According to him, the true meaning of consensus is the unanimous agreement of the previous scholars regarding acting in accordance with a well-known textual inference, where it has become an essential common practice, even among the masses, such as removing outer footwear before wiping one's feet in ablution. Consensus, therefore, follows and supports textual inference, and not the other way around, where the text is extrapolated from the consensus, which is common practice among a particular deviated sect.

It is narrated that Imam al-Sadiq (A) indicated this by saying concerning contradictory reports,

Adopt what is unanimously agreed upon by your associates, for what is unanimous cannot be dubious.³⁵

خذ بالجمع عليه بين أصحابك فإن الجمع عليه لا ريب فيه.

The laymen of this sect study religion by accepting the teachings from their elite – even through intermediaries. Today, as a result, they have become completely confused because they mix up those who are enlightened with those who are only posing to be so. The masses have become confused and ignorant, not guided to anything, not knowing one thing from another. It would be prudent for them to refer to the pious people who recognize the enlightened scholars and can direct people to them. If they cannot do this, then the masses must seek a fatwa from a scholar who seems enlightened to them and who does not sell his religion for this world. If the scholar

gives a verdict, they must ask him whether or not this verdict comes from the Book of Allah, the Sunnah of the Prophet, or the *hadith* of the Imams (A). If the scholar says yes, they should act upon his verdict; but if he says that it does not really come from any of these, but, rather, it was derived from principles or non-textual consensus or something similar, then they should ask someone else, until they find someone who answers according to the Qur'an and *hadith*, or according to *hadith* which advise caution (*ihtiyat*) or allow juristic options (*takhyir*). If laymen do this, they will become learned regarding that specific issue.

This is the manifest truth, the way of our Imami predecessors, and what must be done with regards to religion. Every single person who affiliates himself with the Holy Household (A), calls himself a Shi'a, an Imami, and a Twelver, must do this. If, for no good reason, someone abandons this path for the paths of our opponents, then he no longer has the right to call himself this – even if he thinks he does.

Also, do not presume that knowing what is attributed to the infallible Imams (A) is the same thing as true knowledge in all its clarity and elucidation and strength. Do not presume that what is widely reported (*mutawatir*) is their actual knowledge, and anything else is just a solitary report (*ahad*) which can only generate supposition. No! How could you say that, when the strength of your conviction in their imamate is not the same as the strength of your conviction in their existence? The many reports of their imamate are not the same as the many reports of their existence.

Rather, you did not know until now that conviction –

like uncertainty – has degrees of strength and weakness. It increases in proportion to intellect and adherence to divine law (as the two are mutually dependent). For legal rulings, the lowest level of conviction suffices, although most narrations about legal rulings are no less authentic than the rulings affirming the imamate – in both content and chain of narration. A person acts on the *hadith* he is certain about and should set aside the ones he has no faith in.

In *al-Kafi*, it is narrated that Imam al-Sadiq (A) was asked about controversial *hadith* reported by both trustworthy and untrustworthy narrators. He replied,

If a narration comes to you, and you find evidence for it in the Book of Allah or the words of the Prophet (S) [then accept it]. Otherwise, whoever brought it to you can keep it!³⁶

إذا ورد عليكم حديث، فوجدتم له شاهداً من كتاب الله عز وجل، أو من قول رسول الله (ص)، وإلا فالذي جاءكم به أولى به.

He also said,

Everything must be referred back to the Qur'an and Sunnah, and every narration that does not agree with the Book of Allah is pointless.³⁷

كُلُّ شيءٍ مردود إلى الكتاب والسنة، وكل حديث لا يوافق كتاب الله فهو زُخرف.

In *'Uyun Akhbar al-Rida* (A), there is a long *hadith* from Imam al-Rida (A). After saying that a *hadith* must be referred back first to the Qur'an, then the Sunnah, then put through a process of differentiation and referred back to the Prophet (S), he concluded,

Whenever you cannot find any corroboration in any of these things, refer it back to us, for we are best suited to deal with them. Do not express your own opinions therein. You must hold back, verify

carefully, and investigate further, seeking and searching until clarification comes to you from us.³⁸

وما لم تجدوه في شيء من هذه الوجوه، فَرُدُّوا إلينا علمه، فنحن أولى بذلك، ولا تقولوا فيه بآرائكم، وعليكم بالكفّ والتثبت والوقوف، وأنتم طالبون باحثون حتى يأتيكم البيان من عندنا.

Numerous *hadith* from them – almost enough to reach the level of *tawatur* (certainty in their authenticity due to the number of narrations) – encourage us to act in accordance with their sayings. Among them are narrations that permit us to adopt them, even if the Imam said them while dissimulating his faith, and others that permit us to act upon them even if they did not actually originate from them.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) says,

Whoever hears about the reward for a good deed and performs it will be granted its reward, even if what he heard was not actually true.³⁹

من سمع شيئاً من الثواب على شيء فصنعه كان له أجره وإن لم يكن على ما بلغه.

This is because submission, obedience, and compliance do not involve personal opinion or *ijtihad*.

He also said,

Look after your books for you will need them.⁴⁰

احتفظوا بكتبكم فإنكم سوف تحتاجون إليها.

He said to Mufaddal ibn ‘Umar,

Write, and share your knowledge among your brothers, for when you die, your sons will inherit your books, and a time of such turmoil will come upon people that they will take solace only in their books.⁴¹

أكتب وبُثّ علمك في إخوانك فإن مُتّ فاوَرث كتبك بنيك، فإنه يأتي على الناس زمان هرج لا يأنسون فيه إلا بكتبهم.

Imam al-Mahdi (A) said,

Refer new issues to those who narrate our traditions, for they are my proofs over you and I am Allah's proof over them.⁴²

وَأَمَّا الْحَوَادِثُ الْوَاقِعَةُ فَارْجِعُوا فِيهَا إِلَى رِوَاةِ حَدِيثِنَا فَإِنَّهُمْ حِجَّتِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنَا حِجَّةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِمْ.

In short, they have allowed us to adopt the traditions and writings, and to obey and comply with them. They have not allowed us to use our own opinions or pass juristic judgments regarding them, and have in fact forbidden it. So we must only follow and restrict ourselves to accepting without seeking out the reasoning therein. Allah speaks only the truth and He guides to the right way.

Argumentation and dispute

By the grace and kindness of Allah upon us – innumerable praise be unto Him – Allah has bestowed us with one manifest Imam after another (although they were concealed from our enemies) until two hundred sixty years had passed after the Prophet's migration. Then, after the occultation of the last Imam, He ordained that the Imam's representatives be present among us until the end of the year 330 AH. During this extended period, our scholars learned all the religious sciences, esoteric and exoteric, directly from the source, with contentment in their hearts and tranquillity in their chests, in proportion to their capacity, their status, and their level of knowledge. By this, Allah freed them from following those who must not be followed, and saved them from confusion.

After this period passed, they would refer to the principles handed down from them, which encompassed the majority of issues that people would need to know

about, except for the odd exceptional yet essential issue for which there was neither a general nor specific ruling available from the Imams for scholars to agree upon.

Imam 'Ali (A) said,

O our followers, and adherents to our guardianship! Beware of those who pass edicts according to their own opinions, for indeed they are enemies of the Sunnah and have failed to keep the narrations from slipping through their hands. Their paltry efforts with the Sunnah have been thwarted, so instead they have adopted mere servants of Allah as their property, and His wealth as theirs at their disposal. People bowed their heads before them and obeyed them like dogs, and they challenged the truth and its proponents, fancying themselves to be like the honest, righteous, and infallible Imams while they were actually only ignorant imposters. So when they were asked about that which they had no knowledge of, they were too proud to admit their ignorance, and instead contradicted religion with their opinions. They strayed and led others astray too. If religious matters were indeed to be deduced by analogy, then the soles of the feet would have been better suited for wiping rather than the tops of them.⁴³

يا معشر شيعةنا والمتحليين ولايتنا إياكم وأصحاب الرأي فأفهم أعداء السنن. تغفلت منهم الأحاديث أن يحفظوها، وأعيتهم السنّة أن يعوها، فاتخذوا عباد الله خولا، وماله دولا. فذلت لهم الرقاب وأطاعهم الخلق أشباه الكلاب، ونازعوا الحق وأهله فتمثلوا بالأئمة المعصومين الصالحين وهم من الجهال الملاعين. فستلو اعما لا يعلمون، فأنفوا أن يعترفوا بأنهم لا يعلمون، فعارضوا الدين بآرائهم، فضلو واضلوا. أما لو كان الدين بالقياس لكان باطن الرجلين أولى بالمسح من ظاهرهما.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Whoever issues legal verdicts to the people using his own opinion is answerable to Allah for all that he did not actually know, for he has contradicted Allah by permitting or forbidding things he had no knowledge of.⁴⁴

من أفقّ الناس برأيه فقد دان الله بما لا يعلم، ومن دان الله بما لا يعلم، فقد ضادّ الله حيث أحلّ وحرّم فيما لا يعلم.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) was asked,

‘Issues are brought before us which we neither know about from the Book of Allah nor the Sunnah. Can we deduce them ourselves?’

He replied, ‘No, for if you are correct, you will not be rewarded; and if you are wrong, you will have lied about Allah.’⁴⁵

قيل له (ع): ترد علينا اشياء لا نعرفها في كتاب ولا سنة فننظر فيها؟ قال لا، اما أنك لو أصبت لم تؤجر وإن أخطأت كذبت على الله.

Imam ‘Ali (A) criticised the scholars’ differences of opinion in legal rulings,

You bring a case to someone to issue a legal ruling regarding it, and he gives judgment using his own opinion. Then you bring the same case to someone else, and he issues a different ruling. Then all these judges bring the same case before their *imam* who appointed them as judges in the first place, and he sanctions all their opinions as correct. Their God is the same, their Book is the same, their Prophet is the same – so did Allah command them to differ with one another, and they are obliging? Or did he prohibit it and they are rebelling? Or did Allah send down a deficient religion, and does He need their help to perfect it? Or are they partners to Him, and they speak and He agrees? Or did Allah actually send down a perfect religion, but the Prophet was inefficient in his propagation and teaching?

Allah says in the Qur’an, ‘We have not omitted anything from the Book’ (6:38) and ‘We have sent down the Book to you as a clarification of all things’ (16:89). He has mentioned that some parts of the Book endorse other parts, and that there is no discrepancy therein, as Allah said, ‘Had it been from other than Allah, they would have surely found much discrepancy in it’ (4:82). The Qur’an is such that its outer is systematic and its inner is deep. Its wonders never cease, its marvels never expire, and darkness can only be lifted through it.⁴⁶

ترد على أحدهم القضية في حكم من الأحكام فيحكم فيها برأيه. ثم ترد تلك القضية بعينها على غيره، فيحكم فيها بخلاف قوله، ثم يجتمع القضاة بذلك عند إمامهم الذي استقضاهم فيصوب

آراءهم جميعاً، وإلهم واحداً! وكناهم واحداً! ونبيهم واحداً! أفأمرهم الله سبحانه بالاختلاف فأطاعوه؟! أم فهاهم عنه فعصوه؟! أم أنزل الله سبحانه ديناً ناقصاً فاستعان بهم على اتمامه؟! أم كانوا شركاء له فلهم أن يقولوا وعليه أن يرضى؟ أم أنزل الله ديناً تاماً فقصّر الرسول عن تبليغه وأدائه؟

والله سبحانه يقول: ﴿مَا فَرَطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ﴾ وفيه ﴿نَبِيَّائًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ﴾ وذكر أن الكتاب يصدق بعضه بعضاً وأنه لا اختلاف فيه فقال سبحانه: ﴿وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا﴾ وأن القرآن ظاهره أنيق، وباطنه عميق، لا تفني عجائبه ولا تنقضي غرائب، ولا تنكشف الظلمات إلا به.

He also said,

Know, O servants of Allah, that the believer should deem lawful this year what he knew was lawful the year before; and he should regard unlawful this year what he knew was unlawful the year before. People's innovation cannot make lawful for you what Allah Himself has made unlawful. The lawful is that which Allah has made lawful, and the unlawful is that which Allah has decreed to be unlawful.⁴⁷

اعلموا عباد الله أن المؤمن يستحلّ العام ما استحلّ عاماً أول، ويحرم العام ما حرم عاماً أول، وأن ما أحدث الناس لا يحلّ لكم شيئا مما حرم الله عليكم، ولكن الحلال ما أحلّ الله والحرام ما حرم الله.

Scholastic theology ('ilm al-kalam)

Scholastic theology mostly involves useful proofs from the Qur'an and *hadith*. Everything else is either censured dispute, pointless wrangling about the contrarities of various sects, and elaborate treatises – the majority of which are farces and delirious jabbering that printers scorn and ears dismiss. Most of it delves into matters that have nothing to do with religion.

No part of this science was customary in the early days of Islam, and delving into it as a whole was an innovation. Today, however, it has become an essential science for

safeguarding the hearts of the people from the delusions of heretics. It came about as a reaction to the emergence of the phenomenon of innovation in religion, just like the need to employ bodyguards on the way to hajj came about in reaction to the new threat of criminals and desert robbers in Arabia. If they would abandon their aggression, hiring guards would not be necessary to journey for the hajj.

If a theologian focuses exclusively on debating, neither treading the path of the Hereafter, nor taking responsibility for the maintenance and improvement of his own heart, then he is not a scholar at all. The true theologian must consider religion to be the same set of beliefs that all people believe in, which translates into action and words from the heart. The only distinction between him and the layman is his debating and defence of religion. In fact, the significance of the inner knowledge of Allah, His attributes, His actions, and all the facets of religion that we have mentioned previously cannot be attained through scholastic theology; rather the latter can, at times, even become a barrier and a veil to that end. The only way to arrive at such spiritual knowledge is through striving, which Allah has designed as a precursor to guidance, since He says in the Qur'an,

As for those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them in Our ways. (29:69)

Imam 'Ali (A) said,

Whoever seeks spiritual guidance through argumentation is an atheist.⁴⁸

من طلب الدين بالجدل تزندق.

A man was once reported to have said to Imam al-

Husayn (A), 'Sit down and let us debate about religion'.
He replied,

I already have insight into my own faith, and profess guidance openly. If you are ignorant of your own faith, then go and look for it. I have no business with pointless disputes.⁴⁹

يا هذا أنا بصير بديني، مكشوف عليّ هداي فإن كنت جاهلاً بدينك فاذهب واطلبه، ما لي وللممارات .

It is narrated that Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Controversy destroys faith, nullifies deeds, and engenders doubt.⁵⁰

الخصومة تمحق الدين وتحبط العمل وتورث الشك.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Only the sceptic and the impious dispute (matters of faith).⁵¹

لا يخاصم إلا شاك أو من لا ورع له.

Imam al-Kazim (A) said to 'Ali ibn Yaqtin,

Command your companions to restrain their tongues and desist from arguing about matters of faith, and instead to strive in worshipping Allah, Mighty and Exalted.⁵²

مر أصحابك أن يكفوا ألسنتهم ويدعوا الخصومة في الدين، ويجتهدوا في عبادة الله عزّ وجل.

It is narrated that Imam al-Rida (A) was once asked in a letter written to him,

'Dialectic debating in matters of faith has been prohibited for them, and theologians from among your followers are detracting from it, saying that it is only prohibited for those who are not skilled at debating, and that he has not prohibited the skilled debaters from doing so. Is it indeed as they are saying?'

So he wrote back, 'Neither the skilled nor the unskilled must engage in dialectic debate for indeed it does more harm than good.'⁵³

سئل في مكاتبه أنهم نهوا عن الكلام في الدين فتأول مواليك المتكلمون بأنه إنما نهى من لا يحسن

أن يتكلم فأما من يحسن أن يتكلم فلم ينهه فهل ذلك كما تأولوا؟ فكتب (ع) الحسن وغير
الحسن لا يتكلم فيه فإن إثمه أكبر من نفعه.

Positive and negative debate

They actually discouraged disputing and debating because both have a certain etiquette and conditions that must be observed, and pitfalls that must be avoided. Few are guided to these and succeed in adhering to them. The rest should only debate in that which is positive.

It is narrated that Imam al-Hasan al-‘Askari (A) said,

Once, some people said to Imam al-Sadiq (A) that the Prophet (S) and Imams (A) had forbidden religious debate. So Imam al-Sadiq (A) replied, “They did not forbid it categorically. Rather, they forbade disputing in other than the best manner. Have you not heard Allah’s words in the Qur’an, “Do not dispute with the People of the Book except in the best manner” (29:46), and “Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice and discuss with them in the best manner” (16:125)?

So the religious scholars have commanded us to engage in positive debate, and Allah has prohibited negative debate, or disputing in other than the best way. How could Allah have prohibited it absolutely, when He says, ‘And they say, “No one shall enter Paradise except one who is a Jew or a Christian.” Those are their [false] hopes! Say, “Produce your evidence, should you be truthful”’ (2:111).

He has decreed that truth be known through furnishing evidence, and evidence can only be provided when there is scope for positive debate.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) was asked, ‘What is debating “in the best way”, and other than “the best way”?’ He replied, ‘Debating in other than “the best way” is when you debate a liar, and he presents his lie to you, and you do not refute him with the evidence that Allah has provided. Instead, you deny his words or deny a truth which the liar is supporting his lie with – fighting that truth for fear he will use it as evidence against you because you don’t know how to escape it. That

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is forbidden – it is forbidden for our followers to become a source of dissention (*fitnah*) for their weak brethren or even for liars. But as for the liars, they will use the weakness of the weak ones to reinforce their lie, when they engage them in debate and weaken them. And the hearts of the weak ones waver when they see those who tell the truth weaken in the liar's hand.'

Debating in 'the best way' is what Allah commanded His Prophet to engage in with those who challenge resurrection after death or that Allah will revive him.

Allah says, speaking from their perspective: 'He draws comparisons for Us, and forgets his own creation. He says, "Who shall revive the bones when they have decayed?"' (36:78) He replies with, 'Say [O Muhammad], "He who produced them the first time will revive them, and He has knowledge of all creation. He, who made for you fire out of the green tree..."' (36:79-80).

Allah wanted His Prophet to debate the challenger when He asked, 'How is it possible for these bones to be resurrected when they have decayed?' and Allah said, 'Say, He who produced them the first time will revive them.' Can He who originated them from nothing not bring them back after they decay? Rather, as far as you are concerned, originating them should be harder than bringing them back.

Then He says, 'He, who made for you fire out of the green tree, and behold, you light fire from it!' (36:80). He shows you that since burning fire is concealed within a fresh, green tree until He brings it forth, He is even more capable of bringing something decayed back to life. Then He says, 'Is not He who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like of them? Yes indeed! He is the Creator, the Omniscient' (36:81). That is, if the creation of the heavens and the earth is harder to imagine or understand than the resurrection of something decayed, then how did you accept the creation of something so wondrous and complex to you, and yet reject the resurrection of a decayed body? This should be easier as far as you are concerned.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said, 'This is debating in 'the best way', because through it, the disbelievers' excuses are undercut and arguments nullified. Debating in other than 'the best way' is when you dodge the truth, and you cannot differentiate between it and the contender's lie.

You refute his lie by fighting the truth. This is what is forbidden because you become like him; he opposes one truth, and you oppose another.⁵⁴

ذكر عند الصادق (ع) الجدل في الدين و أن رسول الله (ص) و الأئمة (ع) قد نهوا عنه فقال الصادق (ع): لم يُنه عنه مطلقاً ولكنه نهى عن الجدل بغير التي هي أحسن أما تسمعون الله يقول: ﴿وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ﴾ وقوله: ﴿ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ﴾ فالجدل بالتي هي أحسن قد أمر به العلماء بالدين و الجدل بغير التي هي أحسن محرم حرمة الله على شيعتنا و كيف يحرم الله الجدل جملة و هو يقول ﴿وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى﴾ وقال الله تعالى ﴿تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾ فجعل علم الصدق الإتيان بالبرهان و هل يُؤتى بالبرهان إلا في الجدل بالتي هي أحسن؟

قيل يا ابن رسول الله فما الجدل بالتي هي أحسن و التي ليست بأحسن؟

قال: أما الجدل بغير التي هي أحسن، فإن تجادل مبطلا، فيورد عليك باطلا، فلا ترده بحجة قد نصبها الله، ولكن تجحد قوله أو تجحد حقاً يريد ذلك المبطل أن يعين به باطله، فتجحد ذلك الحق مخافة أن يكون له عليك فيه حجة، لأنك لا تدري كيف المخلص منه، فذلك حرام على شيعتنا أن يصيروا فتنة على ضعفاء إخوانهم، وعلى المبطلين، أما المبطلون فيجعلون ضعف الضعيف منكم إذا تعاطى مجادلته وضعف في يده حجة له على باطله، أما الضعفاء فتغتم قلوبهم لما يرون من ضعف الحق في يد المبطل... قال الصادق (ع): فهذا الجدل بالتي هي أحسن، لأن فيها قطع عُذر الكافرين، وإزالة شبههم، وأما الجدل بغير التي هي أحسن، فإن تجحد حقاً لا يمكنك أن تفرق بينه وبين باطل من تجادله، وإنما تدفعه عن باطله بأن تجحد الحق، فهذا هو الحرّم، لأنك مثله جحد هو حقاً وجحدت أنت حقاً آخر.

Beneficial knowledge

Beneficial knowledge has certain characteristics, signs, and etiquette associated with it. Commenting on the Qur'anic verse 'Only those servants of Allah with knowledge fear Him' (35:28), Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

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By 'those with knowledge', He means those scholars who practise what they preach. Whoever does not practise what he preaches does not have knowledge.⁵⁵

يعني بالعلماء مَنْ صَدَّقَ فعله قوله ومن لم يصدِّق فعله قوله فليس بعالم.

He also said,

Seek knowledge, and, with it, adorn yourselves with forbearance and dignity. Be humble towards your students and teachers, and do not be overbearing scholars lest your wrongdoing chase away your righteousness.⁵⁶

اطلبوا العلم وتزينوا معه بالحلم والوقار، وتواضعوا لمن تعلمونه العلم، وتواضعوا لمن طلبتم منه العلم، ولا تكونوا علماء جبارين فيذهب باطلكم بحقكم.

Imam al-Rida (A) said,

Forbearance and silence are signs of religious understanding.⁵⁷

إن من علامات الفقه الحلم والصمت.

It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (A) that Imam 'Ali (A) said,⁵⁸

Shall I tell you who a true scholar is? He does not make people despair of Allah's mercy, nor does he make them feel safe from His chastisement. He does not make concessions for them to disobey Allah, and he never casts the Qur'an aside for something else. Indeed there is no good in knowledge devoid of understanding; there is no good in Qur'anic recitation devoid of pondering; and there is no good in asceticism devoid of piety.⁵⁹

ألا أخبركم بالفقيه حق الفقيه؟ من لم يُقنطْ الناس من رحمة الله، ولم يؤمنهم من عذاب الله، ولم يرخص لهم في معاصي الله، ولم يترك القرآن رغبة عنه إلى غيره، ألا لا خير في علم ليس فيه تفهُم، ألا لا خير في قراءة ليس فيها تدبر، ألا لا خير في عبادة لا فقه فيها، ألا لا خير في سُكْ لا ورع فيه.

He means that a scholar can only truly be someone who knows the intent behind the Qur'anic promises [of reward] and threats [of punishment]. He recognizes the

goal of all these commands and prohibitions by considering them together. However, in the above narration, 'scholar' is defined negatively through the characteristics that he must *not* possess because most of those whom the masses call 'scholars' – in every age – are defined by their opposites. It is as if he is exposing deviant scholars and imposters, and with every characteristic that he lists, by implication, he invalidates one – or more than one – erroneous school of thought, belief, or practice.

By mentioning the first characteristic – [that the true scholar would not make people despair of Allah's mercy] – he invalidates the Mu'tazilite belief that the threats mentioned in the Qur'an are absolute, in that anyone who commits a grave sin must necessarily be eternally damned to the Hellfire. He also invalidates the Kharijite belief, in that the Kharijites were extremely rigid in their interpretation of Islamic duties.

By mentioning the second characteristic – [that the true scholar would not make people feel safe from Allah's chastisement] – he invalidates the belief of the Murji'ah and all who delude themselves like them; namely, that intercession and having correct belief prevail over all else.

With the third characteristic – [not making concessions for them to disobey Allah] – he invalidates the Hanbali and Ash'arite sects, and others like them, such as most Sufis.

With the fourth characteristic – [not casting the Qur'an aside for something else] – he invalidates those philosophical pretenders who turned away from the Qur'an and its people, and instead sought knowledge and spiritual insight from the books of the ancient philosophers. He also invalidates the Hanafis who use

analogy (*qiyas*) and have abandoned the Qur'an and *hadith*. Knowledge that does not require understanding, such as speculation and imitation, and mere proverbs and quotes, is not true knowledge.

It is narrated that a man once came to Imam al-Baqir (A) and asked him a question. When the Imam replied, the man objected, 'But the scholars do not say that.' The Imam (A) replied,

Woe be to you! Have you even seen a scholar? A scholar – a *true* scholar – abstains from this world and longs for the Hereafter, and holds firm to the Prophet's Sunnah.⁶⁰

يا ويحك فهل رأيت فقيهاً قط؟ إن الفقيه حق الفقيه الزاهد في الدنيا، الراغب في الآخرة، المتمسك بسنة النبي (ص).

It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (A),

Seekers of knowledge are of three types, so identify them by their characteristics and qualities: one type seeks it ignorantly to dispute; another type seeks it presumptuously to manipulate; and the last type seeks it intellectually to understand religion.

The ignorant disputer is offensive and argumentative, always objecting to what people say in their discussions on knowledge and descriptions of forbearance. He assumes the garb of humbleness but is devoid of piety, so Allah brands him on the nose and cuts off his ambition.

The presumptuous, manipulative seeker is both a swindler and a flatterer. He seeks to outdo his fellow counterparts, yet abases himself before wealthy strangers. He will gladly accept their gifts and destroy his own faith in the process. So Allah blinds him to the source of his own good and removes all trace of him from the legacies of the scholars.

The man of reason and learning is melancholic, sorrowful, and wakeful at night. Wrapped in his cloak, he spends the darkness of the night worshipping, fearful, wary, and supplicating apprehensively. He is devoted to his purpose, mindful of the people of his time, estranged from even the most steadfast of his brothers. So Allah reinforces his

foundations and grants him safety on the Day of Judgment.⁶¹

طلبة العلم ثلاثة فاعرفهم باعيانهم وصفاتهم: صنف يطلبه للجهل والمراء، وصنف يطلبه للاستطالة والختل، وصنف يطلبه للفقہ والعقل.

فصاحب الجهل والمراء مؤذٍ مُمار متعرض للمقال في أندية الرجال بتذاكر العلم وصفة الحلم، قد تسربل بالخشوع وتخلّى من الورع فدقّ الله من هذا خيشومه، وقطع منه حيزومه.

وصاحب الاستطالة والختل، ذو خبٍ وملق، يستطيل على مثله من أشباهه، ويتواضع للاغنياء من دونه، فهو خلوائهم هاضم، ولدينه حاطم، فأعمى الله على هذا خبره وقطع من آثار العلماء أثره.

وصاحب الفقه والعقل ذو كآبة وحزن وسهر، قد تحنك في برنسه، وقام الليل في حنسنه، يعمل ويخشى وجلّاً داعياً مشفقاً، مقبلاً على شأنه عارفاً بأهل زمانه، مستوحشاً من أوثق إخوانه، فشدّ الله من هذا أركانه، وأعطاه يوم القيامة أمانه.

The Prophet (S) said,

Scholars are of two types: the scholar who practises what he knows and is saved, and the scholar who abandons his knowledge and perishes. The stench of the scholar who abandoned his knowledge will vex the inmates of the Fire. The most regretful and remorseful person in the Fire will be the one who called someone to Allah, and that person responded, accepted, obeyed Allah, and Allah granted him Paradise. However, Allah will throw that caller into the Fire for abandoning his knowledge, following his desires, and having farfetched hopes. Following the desires blocks people from the truth, and farfetched hopes cause people to forget the Hereafter.⁶²

العلماء رجلان: رجل عالم أخذ بعلمه فهذا ناج، وعالم تارك لعلمه فهذا هالك، وأن أهل النار ليتأذون من ريح العالم التارك لعلمه، وأن أشد أهل النار ندامة وحسرة رجل دعى عبداً إلى الله فاستجاب له وقبل منه، فاطاع الله فأدخله الجنة، وأدخل الداعي النار بتركه علمه واتباعه الهوى وطول الأمل، أما اتباع الهوى فيصدّ عن الحق وطول الأمل يُنسى الآخرة.

He also said,

Two types of greedy people are never satiated: the seeker of the world, and the seeker of knowledge. Whoever takes only what is

lawful from the world will remain safe, but whoever takes what is unlawful will perish unless he repents and turns back. Whoever takes knowledge from its custodians and acts upon it will be saved, but whoever wants knowledge for worldly ends will be granted only the world.⁶³

منهومان لا يشبعان: طالب دنيا وطالب علم، فمن اقتصر من الدنيا على ما أحل الله له سلم، ومن تناولها من غير حلها هلك، إلا أن يتوب أو يراجع، ومن أخذ العلم من أهله وعمل بعلمه نجا، ومن أراد به الدنيا فهي حظه.

Imam al-Sajjad (A) said that it is written in the Evangel,

Do not pursue what you do not know if you would not act upon it if you learned it, for knowledge which is not acted upon will only increase a person's disbelief and distance from Allah.⁶⁴

مكتوب في الانجيل: لا تطلبوا علم ما لا تعلمون ولما تعملوا بما علمتم، فإن العلم إذا لم يعمل به لم يزد صاحبه إلا كفرًا، ولم يزد من الله إلا بعدًا.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Whoever seeks knowledge to argue with scholars, dispute with fools, or to deceive people should take his seat in the Hellfire; leadership only suits those who are worthy of it.⁶⁵

من طلب العلم ليهامي به العلماء، أو يماري به السفهاء، أو يصرف به وجوه الناس، فليتبوأ مقعده من النار؛ إن الرئاسة لا تصلح إلا لأهلها.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Knowledge is linked to action. Whoever knows, acts; and whoever acts, knows. Knowledge calls for action, and whoever does not answer this call loses his knowledge.⁶⁶

العلم مقرون بالعمل، فمن علم عمل ومن عمل علم، والعلم يهتف بالعمل، فإن أجابه وإلا ارتحل عنه.



If you see a scholar in love with this world, do not trust him with

your religion, for every lover safeguards what he loves.⁶⁷

إذا رأيتم العالم محباً للدين فاقموا على دينكم فإن كلَّ محبٍ لشيءٍ يحوط ما أحب.

Prerequisites for learning

A student must purify himself from character vices and blameworthy traits since knowledge is worship for the heart, prayer for the spirit, and the inward way to approach Allah. Just as the body cannot perform the prayers correctly unless it is purified of filth, the inner self cannot worship – nor the heart be nurtured – unless the heart is purified of ugly traits and dirty qualities.

The Prophet (S) said, 'Religion is founded on cleanliness'⁶⁸ – physical and spiritual.

بُني الدين على النظافة.

Allah says, 'The polytheists are unclean' (9:28). He is cautioning the mind that purity and impurity are not limited to the external or tangible, for a polytheist may wear clean clothes and wash his body; however, his essence – that is, his inside – is tainted with impurities. Although he may shun and avoid physical filth, avoiding spiritual impurities is more important, for their pollution now destroys the future abode.

Therefore, the Prophet (S) said,

The angels do not enter a house where there is a dog.⁶⁹

لا تدخل الملائكة بيتا فيه كلب.

The heart is a house for the angels. Their vestiges alight upon and settle in the heart. Anger, desire, malice, jealousy, pride, self-admiration, and their sister-traits are like dogs barking therein. How can the angels enter a

heart which is full of dogs? Especially since Allah only casts the light of knowledge into the heart through the angels.

Sincerity and teaching

A teacher must teach sincerely for the sake of Allah, not for the sake of greed. He must empathize with his student, advise him well, and only teach him what he can understand. He must confer his knowledge only upon those who are worthy of it and withhold it from the unworthy.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Jesus, son of Mary (A), stood and addressed the Children of Israel. 'O Children of Israel! Do not speak of wisdom to the ignorant, for they will do injustice to it. Do not withhold it from the worthy, for you will do injustice to them.'⁷⁰

قام عيسى بن مريم خطيباً في بني إسرائيل فقال: يا بني إسرائيل لا تحدثوا الجاهل بالحكمة فتظلموها، ولا تمنعوها أهلها فتظلموهم.

He also must not speak about what he does not know.

Once, Imam al-Baqir (A) was asked, 'What is Allah's right over His servants?' He replied,

That they speak about what they know and stop speaking when they do not know something.⁷¹

أن يقولوا ما يعلمون ويوقفوا عند ما لا يعلمون.

It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (A),

Allah dedicated two verses in His book to telling His servants not to speak until they know, and not to reject what they do not know. He says, 'Was not the covenant of the Book taken with them – that they not attribute to Allah anything but the truth?' (7:169) and 'They denied that, the knowledge whereof they could not compass, and

whereof the interpretation had not yet come to them.' (10:39)⁷²

إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَصَّ عِبَادَهُ بِآيَاتِينَ مِنْ كِتَابِهِ أَنْ لَا يَقُولُوا حَتَّى يَعْلَمُوا وَلَا يَرُدُّوا مَا لَا يَعْلَمُوا وَقَالَ: ﴿أَلَمْ يُؤْخَذْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِيثَاقُ الْكِتَابِ أَنْ لَا يَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ﴾ وَقَالَ: ﴿بَلْ كَذَّبُوا بِمَا لَمْ يُحِيطُوا بِعِلْمِهِ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِهِمْ تَأْوِيلُهُ﴾.



Beware of two vices which cause people to perish. Beware of issuing people legal verdicts based on your own opinion, and beware of passing judgment on what you do not know.⁷³

إِيَّاكَ وَخَصَلَتَيْنِ فَفِيهِمَا هَلَكٌ مِنْ هَلَكٍ: إِيَّاكَ وَأَنْ تَفِيَّ النَّاسَ بِرَأْيِكَ أَوْ تَدِينُ بِمَا لَا تَعْلَمُ.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Whenever someone issues legal verdicts to people without knowledge or guidance from Allah, the angels of mercy and the angels of damnation curse him, and he bears the burden of whoever acts upon his verdict.⁷⁴

مَنْ أَفَى النَّاسَ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَلَا هُدًى مِنَ اللَّهِ لَعَنَتْهُ مَلَائِكَةُ الرَّحْمَةِ وَمَلَائِكَةُ الْعَذَابِ وَخَلَقَهُ وَزَرَ مِنْ عَمَلٍ بِفَتْيَاهُ.

'Knowledge' here encompasses everything derived from divine light and true inspiration; the Imams (A) had this. 'Guidance' encompasses everything related from the Household of the Prophet; we have this. The angels of mercy guide the souls of the good to their stations in the ranks of the heavens. The angels of damnation drive the souls of the evil to their abodes in the pits of Hell and the Fire.

It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (A),

If you are asked about something you know nothing of, you must say 'I do not know', not 'Allah knows', lest doubt enter the heart of the questioner. When you say 'I do not know', the questioner will not think ill of you.⁷⁵

إذا سئلَ رجلٌ منكم عما لا يعلم فليقل لا أدري، ولا يقول الله أعلم فيوقع في قلب صاحبه شكًا،
وإذا قال المسئول لا أدري فلا يتهمه السائل.

Knowledge and worship

A person who wishes to worship Allah must first learn how to worship from the proper source. The source of all knowledge is the Household of the Prophet (S), where revelation settled and wisdom sprung; they have taken their knowledge from Allah.

Regarding the Qur'anic verse 'Let man look at his food' (8:24), Imam al-Baqir (A) was asked, 'What kind of food is this?' He replied,

His knowledge – he should consider who he takes it from.⁷⁶

علمه الذي يأخذه عمن يأخذه.

Although the verse could be interpreted literally, he focused on its inner meaning.

The Prophet (S) said,

Whoever acts without knowledge does more harm than good.⁷⁷

من عمل بغير علم كان ما يُفسد أكثر مما يُصلح.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

A person who performs an act of virtue without insight is like a traveller going the wrong way; his speed will only distance him farther.⁷⁸

العامل على غير بصيرة، كالسائر على غير الطريق، لا يزيده سرعة السير إلا بعداً.

The secret behind this is that the essential goal is not to reform and purify the heart through mere physical acts of worship, nor to cleanse and discipline the soul through

bodily movements because this purification is intended to cause certain qualities to disappear – and non-existence cannot be a purpose in and of itself; rather, it must be a means to something else. The real goal is to unveil higher spiritual truths about Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day – to each and every person according to his intellect, understanding, and other capacities. These spiritual truths cannot be revealed to the heart unless it is reformed and purified the way the Prophet (S) instructed, and with correct belief – even just by hearing about them.

If someone limits his spiritual quest to haphazard deeds, indiscriminate spiritual exercises, and efforts void of any insight or understanding, his attempts at purification will actually work against him, for delusional thoughts and obsessive whisperings will overwhelm him. His heart will be a mess since he did not train his soul with real knowledge and correct thinking, nor did he adopt the correct method of worship from the Prophet (S) and his successors (A). Corrupt ideas, erroneous concepts, and false illusions will cling to his heart. He may even entertain baseless – and even heretical and atheistic – beliefs about Allah's essence or attributes, although he will insist they are sound and true. We seek refuge in Allah from this! Others may follow him, in which case his evil will spread beyond himself, and he will have become one of those ignorantly devout people who pose a mortal danger to others.

As if that were not enough, it is rare to find someone free from self-admiration, pride in his knowledge, or self-delusion about his worship. This type of person holds others in contempt and derision while his inner self is

brimming with psychological diseases. He is completely unaware of these diseases, let alone their removal or treatment. He may even imagine these vices to be virtues, and these flaws to be perfections, as Allah says in His book:

Say, 'Shall We inform you about the biggest losers in regard to works? Those whose endeavour goes awry in the life of the world, while they suppose they are doing good.' (18:103-4)

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

Two types of people have broken my back: a shameless yet knowledgeable man and a religious but ignorant man, for the ignorant man dupes people with his religiosity while the knowledgeable man drives them away with his shamelessness.⁷⁹

قصم ظهري رجلاً، عالم متهتك وجاهل متنسك، فالجاهل يغير [يغترخ] الناس بتسنكه والعالم ينفرهم بتهتكه.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Allah does not accept any act without spiritual knowledge, and spiritual knowledge only comes through action. When someone has spiritual knowledge, his knowledge will lead him to action; but whoever does not act [in accordance with his knowledge] will not have any spiritual knowledge left. Truly, faith has many parts [such as knowledge and action] which depend on each other.⁸⁰

لا يقبل الله عملاً إلا بمعرفة ولا معرفة إلا بالعمل فمن عرف دلته المعرفة على العمل، ومن لم يعمل فلا معرفة له. ألا أن الإيمان بعضه من بعض.

This means that each glimmer of spiritual insight inspires a certain state and form of clarity inside the soul. Every state incites the person to act and worship. Every act of worship, in turn, inspires another state and another form of clarity – different from the first – which, in turn, gives rise to a different insight. Thus, man's faith is

completed through inner spiritual knowledge and worship until he attains the goal. No longer will he have to toil and struggle; instead, he will be able to reside in the everlasting abode of peace and comfort, having reached true conviction.

This is like someone who walks in the dark with a lamp. Every time the lamp illuminates a small part of the road ahead, he walks onto it; when he walks forward, he illuminates the next part of the road, and so on. A Prophetic narration says,

When a person acts on what he knows, Allah bestows upon him that which he does not know.⁸¹

من علم وعمل بما علم، ورثه الله علم ما لا يعلم.

Innovation (*bid'ah*) and personal opinion

Numerous narrations have come to us from the Imams of Guidance (A) censuring innovators, those who indulge their own whims, and ignorant fraudsters posing as scholars. We will only quote a few of them here.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

The Prophet (S) said, 'When you see innovators and cynics (*ahl al-rayb*) after me, openly disassociate from them, criticize them, and expose their true selves. Defame them so they never again seek to corrupt Islam. Warn people about them lest they learn from their innovations, and Allah, the Exalted, will write down for you the reward of many good deeds and will raise you many degrees.'⁸²

إذا رأيتم أهل البدع والريب من بعدي فأظهروا البراءة منهم، وأكثروا من سبهم، والقول فيهم، والوقعة، وباهتوهم حتى لا يطمعوا في الفساد في الإسلام ويحذروهم الناس، ولا يتعلمون من بدعهم، يكتب الله تعالى لكم بذلك الحسنات، ويرفع لكم فيه الدرجات.

The Prophet (S) also said,

When innovations arise in my community, the scholar must openly assert his knowledge; if he does not do so, the curse of Allah will be upon him.⁸³

إذا ظهرت البدع في أمتي، فليظهر العالم علمه، فمن لم يفعل فعليه لعنة الله.



Whenever innovation arises after me, concocted to destroy faith, a guardian from my household will defend the faith. Speaking through inspiration from Allah, he will declare the truth and bring it to light. He will foil the evil plots of the conspirators and speak for the weak. O people of insight, take a lesson from this and trust in Allah.⁸⁴

إن عند كل بدعة تكون من بعدي، يكاد بما الإيمان ولياً من أهل بيتي، (موكلاً به خ) يذب عنه، ينطق بالهام من الله، ويعلن الحق وينوره، ويرد كيد الكائدين، يعبر عن الضعفاء، فاعتبروا يا أولي الأبصار، وتوكلوا على الله.



Every innovation is a deviation, and every deviation leads to the Fire.⁸⁵

كل بدعة ضلالة وكل ضلالة في النار.

The Commander of the Faithful [‘Ali ibn Abi Talib] (A) said in one of his sermons,

Mischief in society arises when desires are followed, rulings are invented that contradict Allah’s Book, and people appoint each other as leaders. If falsehood were clearly distinct, discerning people would not waver. And if the truth were clear-cut, there would be no differences. However, parts of truth and falsehood intermingle and come together as one. Then Satan gets the best of his followers, while those who have received news of a promise of reward from Allah will be saved.⁸⁶

إنما بدء وقوع الفتن أهواء تتبع، وأحكام تتبدع، يُخالف فيها كتاب الله، يتولى فيها رجال رجلاً، فلو أن الباطل خلس لم يخف على ذي حجب، ولو أن الحق خلس لم يكن اختلاف، ولكن يؤخذ من هذا ضعف ومن هذا ضعف، فيمزجان ويحيثان معاً، فهناك استحوذ الشيطان على أوليائه،

ونجا الذين سبقت لهم من الله الحسنى.

He (A) also said,

Two types of people are among those whom Allah has the most intense aversion to. The first is the one whom Allah has left to his own self, for he has deviated from the right path by inclining towards words of innovation. He is very diligent in his fasting and his prayer, which makes him even more of a trial for those who are misled by him. He has strayed from the guidance of those who lived before him, and he leads others astray, who follow him in his lifetime and after his death. He carries the burden of others' sins in addition to his own.

The other is a man who gathers up ignorance among the ignorant, captivated by the dark shadows of mischief. These so-called men consider him to be a scholar while he did not even have wholesome knowledge for a single day. He started early and considered the little that he had gained as better and more than enough. He quenches himself from brackish water and treasures something useless. He sits among people issuing verdicts and self-assuredly clarifies what is confusing for others. When he contradicts the ruling of a scholar before him, there is no guarantee that his ruling will not be challenged by one who succeeds him, just as he had done with scholars before him. If he is made to face a complicated and ambiguous matter, he comes up with a whole host of his own opinions and makes a final decision based on that. He has enveloped himself in dubiousness, like a spider's web, and does not even know whether he is right or wrong.

He does not consider it necessary to learn what he does not know, nor does he see that there is another view besides his own opinion. When uses analogy, he will never accept his opinion to be wrong, and if a matter remains obscure for him, he will bury it to conceal his ignorance that he knows only too well. He hides the truth so that nobody can say that he does not know. Then he audaciously passes a verdict anyway.

Thus, he opens the way for obscurities, rides on ambiguities, and acts haphazardly in his ignorance. He never rues his lack of knowledge so that he may remedy it, nor does he ever delve into knowledge deeply enough to benefit. He blows away narrations the way the wind blows

away hay. Heirs [denied their rights] weep because of him, blood [shed and unjustly solved or sentenced] shouts out against him. By his verdicts, extra-marital relations become lawful, and lawful relations become unlawful. There is no confidence to be had in the verdicts that he issues, nor was he qualified to issue them in the first place in matters that he claimed to have true knowledge of.⁸⁷

إن من أبغض الخلق إلى الله تعالى لرجلين: رجل وكله الله إلى نفسه فهو جائر عن قصد السبيل، مشعوف بكلام بدعة، قد هج بالصوم والصلاة فهو فتنة لمن افتتن به، ضال عن هدي من كان قبله، مضل لمن اقتدى به في حياته وبعد موته، حمال خطايا غيره، رهن بخطيئته.

ورجل قمش جهلاً في جهال الناس، عان بأغباش الفتنة، قد سماه أشباه الناس عالماً ولم يغن فيه يوماً سالماً، بكر فاستكثر، ما قل منه خير مما كثر، حتى إذا ارتوى من آجن وأكثر من غير طائل، جلس بين الناس قاضياً ضامناً لتخليص ما التبس على غيره، وإن خالف قاضياً سبقه، لم يأمن أن ينقض حكمه من يأتي بعده، كفعله بمن كان قبله، وإن نزلت به إحدى المبهلمات المعضلات، هياً لها حشواً من رأيه، ثم قطع به، فهو من لبس الشبهات في مثل غزل العنكبوت لا يدري أصاب أم أخطأ، لا يحسب العلم في شيء مما أنكر، ولا يرى أن وراء ما بلغ فيه مذهباً، إن قاس شيئاً بشيء لم يكذب نظره وإن أظلم عليه أمر اكتتم به، لما يعلم من جهل نفسه، يكن الصواب لكيلاً يقال له: لا يعلم، ثم جسر فقضى.

فهو مفتاح عشوات، ركاب شبهات، خباط جهالات، لا يعتذر فيما لا يعلم فيسلم، ولا يعرض في العلم بضرس قاطع فيغنم، يذري الروايات ذرو الرياح الهشيم تبكي منه المواريث، وتصرخ منه الدماء، يستحل بقضائه الفرج الحرام، ويحرم بقضائه الفرج الحلال، لا ملئ بإصدار ما عليه ورد، ولا هو أهل (إجل خ) لما منه فرط من ادعائه علم الحق.

Imam 'Ali (A) also said,

I complain to Allah about people who spend their lives in ignorance and die in deviation. For them, no commodity is more worthless than the Qur'an when its recitation is given its due, nor is anything more valuable and useful to them than the Qur'an when its verses are distorted from their original meanings. To them, nothing is more odious than virtue, and nothing more honoured than vice.⁸⁸

إلى الله أشكو من معشر يعيشون جهلاً ويموتون ضلّالاً، ليس فيهم سلعة أبور من الكتاب، إذا تلي حق تلاوته، ولا أنفق سلعة وأغلى ثمناً من الكتاب إذا حُرّف عن مواضعه، ولا عندهم أنكر من المعروف ولا أعرف من المنكر.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

The advocates of using analogy [to derive religious rulings] have sought knowledge from analogies, but it has not increased their knowledge of the truth; rather, it has increased their distance from it. The religion of Allah cannot be attained through analogy.⁸⁹

إن أصحاب المقائيس طلبوا العلم بالمقائيس، فلم يزدتهم المقائيس من الحق إلا بعداً وإن دين الله لا يصاب بالمقائيس

Imam al-Kazim (A) said,

Whoever judges based on his own opinion will perish, and whoever abandons the Book of Allah and the sayings of the Prophet (S) is an infidel.⁹⁰

من نظر برأيه هلك ومن ترك كتاب الله وقول نبيه كفر.

Since our aim in this book was to specifically focus on the truths of the religious sciences, we have sufficed ourselves with that, and have not sought to turn our attention to anything else, including any other sciences.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

Knowledge is too vast to be encompassed, so take the best of every branch of knowledge.⁹¹

العلم أكثر من أن يحاط به فخذوا من كل علم أحسنه.

Elsewhere, he is quoted as adding,

For bees eat only the choicest part of the flower and produce two treasures as a result, one of which is a cure for humankind, and one of which can be used for lighting.⁹²

فإن النحل يأكل من كل زهر أزينه فيتولد جوهراً: أحدهما فيه شفاء للناس، والآخر يستضاء به.

Allah's words support this:

So give good news to My servants who listen to the word [of Allah] and follow the best of it. They are the ones whom Allah has guided, and it is they who possess intellect. (39:17-18)

Notes

- ¹ Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (n.l.: n.d.), vol. 1, p. 10.
- ² al-Shaykh al-Saduq (Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Babawayh al-Qummi), *'Uyun Akhbar al-Rida (A)* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-'Alami li al-Matbu'at, 1984), vol. 1, p. 40.
- ³ Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi* (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1984), vol. 1, p. 30.
- ⁴ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 35.
- ⁵ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 33; Qutb al-Din al-Rawandi, *al-Da'awat*, p. 62.
- ⁶ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 35.
- ⁷ al-Shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi, *al-Amali* (Qum: Dar al-Thaqafah li al-Taba'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawdi', 1414 AH), p. 500; Ibn Fahd al-Hilli, *'Uddat al-Da'i wa Najah al-Sa'i* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Islami, 1987), p. 73.
- ⁸ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 8, p. 247.
- ⁹ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 1, p. 24.
- ¹⁰ al-Sharif al-Sayyid Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Radi, *Nahj al-Balaghah* (Qum: al-Nahdah, 1412 AH), sermon 87.
- ¹¹ Ibid., sermon 220.
- ¹² Ibid., sermon 5.
- ¹³ al-Mufid, *al-Irshad* (n.l.: n.d.), p. 23.
- ¹⁴ Kashani, *al-Mahajjah* (n.l.: n.d.), vol. 1, p. 64, citing *Rijal al-Naysaburi*.
- ¹⁵ al-Radi, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, saying 147.
- ¹⁶ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 401; Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Saffar, *Basa'ir al-Darajat* (Tehran: Manshurat al-'Alami, 1404 AH), p. 45.
- ¹⁷ al-Saduq, *'Uyun Akhbar al-Rida (A)*, vol. 2, p. 64.
- ¹⁸ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 401.
- ¹⁹ Narration mentioned in al-Sayyid Muhsin al-Amin, *A'yan al-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar al-Ta'aruf, 1983), vol. 7, p. 286.

- ²⁰ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 242.
- ²¹ al-Saffar, *Basa'ir al-Darajat*, p. 48.
- ²² Ibid., p. 48.
- ²³ Ibid., p. 49.
- ²⁴ Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Barqi, *al-Mahasin* (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1370 AH), vol. 1, p. 255.
- ²⁵ al-Saffar, *Basa'ir al-Darajat*, p. 46.
- ²⁶ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 31.
- ²⁷ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 1, p. 214.
- ²⁸ al-Barqi, *al-Mahasin*, vol. 1, p. 229.
- ²⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 13.
- ³⁰ Alternate ending: 'Whomever Allah wills to guide.' al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 67, p. 141.
- ³¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 402.
- ³² al-Saffar, *Basa'ir al-Darajat*, p. 531, quoted as being on the authority of Imam al-Baqir (A)
- ³³ Referring to a *hadith* which has not been narrated in enough separate instances to ensure its unquestionable reliability. Typically, those 'grounded in knowledge' refers to the Household of the Prophet (S).
- ³⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 68.
- ³⁵ Discussed in *ibid.*, p. 9.
- ³⁶ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 69.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ al-Saduq, *'Uyun Akhbar al-Rida (A)*, vol. 2, p. 24.
- ³⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 87.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 52.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² al-Shaykh Fadl ibn Hasan al-Tabarsi, *al-Ihtijaj* (Najaf: Dar al-Nu'man li al-Taba'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawdi', 1966), vol. 2, p. 283.
- ⁴³ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 2, p. 84, quoted from the *tafsir* ascribed to Imam Hasan al-Askari (A).
- ⁴⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 57.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 56.
- ⁴⁶ al-Radi, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon 18.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., sermon 176.
- ⁴⁸ al-Shaykh al-Saduq (Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Babawayh al-Qummi), *al-I'tiqadat fi Din al-Imamiyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Mufid li al-Taba'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawdi', 1993, 2nd ed.), p. 43.
- ⁴⁹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 2, p. 135.

⁵⁰ al-Shaykh al-Saduq (Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Babawayh al-Qummi), *al-Tawhid* (Qum: Manshurat Jama'at al-Mudarrisin fi al-Hawzah al-'Ilmiyyah bi Qum al-Muqaddasah), p. 458, no. 21.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 460, no. 30.

⁵² al-Saduq, *al-Tawhid*, p. 460, no. 29.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 459, no. 26.

⁵⁴ al-Tabarsi, *al-Ihtijaj*, vol. 1, p. 15.

⁵⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 36. This refers to someone who has firm and steadfast spiritual knowledge, such that his whims do not affect it whatsoever. This firm and steadfast knowledge must lead him to speak, and his attestation of the truth must in turn lead him to act and practise according to these principles. A scholar or knowledgeable person in this sense of the word is one whose fear of His Lord's discipline leads him to obedience and to practise what he preaches.

⁵⁶ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 36; al-Shaykh al-Saduq (Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Babawayh al-Qummi), al-Saduq, *Amali al-Saduq* (Qum: Markaz al-Taba'ah wa al-Nashr fi Mu'assasat al-Bi'thah, 1417 AH, 1st ed.), p. 440; al-Fattal al-Nishaburi, *Rawdat al-Wa'izin wa Basirat al-Mutta'izin* (Qum: Manshurat al-Sharif al-Radi, 1386 AH), p. 10; al-Qadi al-Nu'man al-Maghribi, *Da'a'im al-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1963), vol. 1, p. 80.

⁵⁷ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 36.

⁵⁸ In an alternate narration, these words are attributed to Imam al-Rida (A).

⁵⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 36; al-Shaykh al-Saduq (Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Babawayh al-Qummi), *Ma'ani al-Akhbar* (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islami al-Tabi'ah li-Jama'at al-Mudarrisin bi Qum al-Musharrarah, 1379 AH), p. 226.

⁶⁰ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 70.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 49.

⁶² Ibid., p. 44.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 46.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 44.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 47.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 44, on the authority of Imam 'Ali (A) as mentioned in al-Hilli, *Uddat al-Da'i*, p. 78.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 46.

⁶⁸ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 1, p. 48.

⁶⁹ al-Shaykh al-Saduq (Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Babawayh al-Qummi), *Man La Yahduruhu al-Faqih* (Qum: Manshurat Jama'at al-Mudarrisin fi al-

Hawza al-'Ilmiyya fi Qum al-Muqaddasa, 1392 AH), vol. 1, p. 246.

⁷⁰ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 42.

⁷¹ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 43; al-Barqi, *al-Mahasin*, p. 204.

⁷² al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 43.

⁷³ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 42; al-Barqi, *al-Mahasin*, p. 204.

⁷⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 42; al-Barqi, *al-Mahasin*, p. 205.

⁷⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 42; al-Barqi, *al-Mahasin*, p. 206.

⁷⁶ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 50.

⁷⁷ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 44.

⁷⁸ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 43; al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *al-Amali* (Beirut: Dar al-Mufid li al-Taba'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawdi', 1993, 2nd ed.), p. 42. In al-Hilli, *'Uddat al-Da'i*, p. 74, it is also narrated that the Prophet (S) said: 'The one who worships without insight is like the traveller taking a wrong path – the speed of his travel will only distance him farther.'

⁷⁹ Ibn Abi Jumah al-Ahsa'i, *'Awali al-La'ali* (Qum: Sayyid al-Shuhada, 1985, 1st ed.), vol. 4, p. 77.

⁸⁰ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 44.

⁸¹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 40, p. 128.

⁸² al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 375; Warram ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawtir* (n.l.: n.d.), p. 397.

⁸³ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 54.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 56.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 54.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 55.

⁸⁸ al-Radi, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon 17.

⁸⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 56; al-Barqi, *al-Mahasin*, p. 211.

⁹⁰ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 56.

⁹¹ al-Amidi, 'Abd al-Wahid ibn Tamimi, *Ghurur al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, (Qum: Maktab al-I'lam al-Islami fi al-Hawza al-'Ilmiyyah fi Qum al-Muqaddasah, 1st ed.), p. 46.

⁹² Ibid., p. 46.

❖ The Tenets of Faith ❖

Introduction

Know that it is not permissible to adopt tenets of faith other than what Allah – glory be to Him – has revealed to the prophets and their vicegerents, alongside the intrinsic knowledge that Allah has placed in humankind. Allah says:

So set your heart on the religion as a people of pure faith, the nature (*fitrah*) of Allah according to which He originated humankind. There is no altering Allah's creation; that is the upright religion, but most people do not know. (30:30)

It is narrated that, here, *fitrah*¹ means 'inner knowledge'; another narration says it means 'monotheism'.

It is narrated that the Prophet (S) said,

Every new-born comes into this world with a natural [monotheistic] disposition, but his parents make him into a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian.²

كل مولود يولد على الفطرة، فأبواه يهودانه وينصرانه ويمجسانه.

The *fitrah* is the inherent human nature, the instinctive intellect which acts as an inner moral compass, just as the divine law acts as an outer intellect. The intellect is like a lamp, and the divine law is like oil for the lamp. Without oil, the lamp will not light; but without the lamp, the oil

will not glow by itself. Similarly, the intellect is like the eyes, and the divine law is like the rays of the sun. The eyes are useless without the sun's rays, but the sun's rays are also useless without the eyes.

Certainly there has come to you a light from Allah, and a manifest Book. With it Allah guides those who follow [the course of] His pleasure to the ways of peace, and brings them out from darkness into light by His will. (5:15-16)

So away with those peoples who have abandoned their intellects, turned away from their prophets and follow their base desires! They have strayed and led others astray.

The wisest of all those vested with intellect is our Prophet (S), and the best of all divine moral codes is the law that he brought – or, rather, that Allah revealed to him. He sent the Book through him to uphold justice among people. He carried out Allah's command, guided people to Allah's straight path, and directed them to true knowledge of their Maker and the Last Day through clear evidence and proofs which fit with their own reasoning. He drew their attention to the proofs and arguments that their own understanding had reached. He brought each group proofs, rhetoric, and debates that appealed to their own intellect and understanding. He performed miracles for those who would be best convinced through them so they would attain enlightenment in their situation. By virtue of those same proofs, those who perished perished, and those who were revived truly lived.

Then he perfected the specifics of the religion for them so that his nation would not need to turn to the practices of their predecessors. He aided them in the religious matters that concerned them so that no one could say that

affirming the truth of the prophets and the divine law depends on first affirming the Creator and His perfect attributes. For even if the bearer of this message were someone whose word were not accepted, and even if he were not impeccable in his actions, still, the very message itself would have been a proof because it conforms with the judgment of sound intellect. Its arguments would be followed by any sound person, and its signs and evidence are convincing because the knowledge of the Creator and His Attributes – on which the knowledge of the shariah is based – is self-evident. Allah, Mighty and Exalted, says:

If you ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will surely say, 'Allah'. (39:38)

He established that the divine revealed law and intrinsic intellect that sound people are endowed with are sufficient to guide a person onto the path of truth. There was no need for artificial, cumbersome ceremonies to be imposed differently upon different social classes, with their differing opinions and clashing whims in inventing proofs for their practices as part of their religion.

This is because they combined ignorance and misconduct. Ignorantly, they could not recognise the signs which Allah provided as proof. Their misconduct was in direct opposition to Allah when they imported their suppositions into their religion and put their own views above what Allah had indicated. Did Allah reveal an incomplete religion and require their assistance in completing it, or did He reveal a complete religion which the Prophet (S) fell short of proclaiming and propagating? Glory be to Allah! He says:

We have not omitted anything from the Book. (6:38)

A clarification of all things. (16:89)

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

Outwardly, the Qur'an is systematic; and, inwardly, it is deep. Its wonders never cease, its marvels never end, and darkness can only be lifted through it.³

القرآن ظاهره أنيق، وباطنه عميق، لا تفي عجائبه، ولا تنقضي غرائب، ولا تنكشف الظلمات إلا به.

The 'two weighty things' (*al-thaqalayn*)

It has been established that the best guide to Allah is our Prophet (S). It has also been established that he left behind two weighty things to succeed him: the Book of Allah, and his chosen progeny. The only thing he advised his community to do with them was to adhere to them. The narrations about this are abundant in Sunni and Shi'a sources; they differ in their wording but agree in meaning.

It is narrated that the Prophet (S) said,

I leave among you two things. If you hold fast to them, you will never deviate after me. [They are]: the Book of Allah and my family, my household; these two will never separate until they meet me at the Heavenly Fount.⁴

إني تارك فيكم ما إن تمسكتم به لن تضلوا بعدي، كتاب الله وعترتي أهل بيتي، فإنهما لن يفترقا حتى يردا عليّ الخوض.

'Never separating' means that the pure progeny have complete knowledge of the Book. So whoever adheres to them, in fact, adheres to them both.

According to a second narration, the Prophet (S) said,

I am a man who is soon to die. I am about to be called, and I will answer. And I leave among you two weighty things.⁵

إني إمراً مقبوضٌ وأوشك أن أدعى فأجيب وقد تركت فيكم الثقلين.

According to a third narration, the Prophet (S) said,

The greater of the two is the Book of Allah because one side of it is in the hand of Allah and the other in yours, so adhere to it, and you will not slip or deviate. The lesser of the two is my progeny. Do not kill or oppress them, for I have asked the Gracious and All-Aware God to allow these two to meet me at the Heavenly Fount, and He has granted me this. So whoever oppresses them oppresses me, whoever forsakes them forsakes me, whoever is loyal to them is loyal to me, and whoever is their enemy is my enemy.⁶

الأكبر منهما كتاب الله سبب طرف بيد الله وطرف بأيديكم فتمسكوا به لا تزلوا ولا تضلوا، والأصغر منهما عترتي، لا تقتلوه ولا تقهروهم، فإني سألت لهم اللطيف الخبير أن يردا عليّ الخوض فأعطاني، فقاهرهما قاهري، وخاذلهما خاذلي، ووليتهما وليي، وعدوتهما عدوي.

Another narration adds,

And they are the two successors after me.⁷

وهما الخليفان من بعدي.

When the Commander of the Faithful (A) was asked who 'progeny' referred to in this narration, he replied:

Myself, al-Hasan, al-Husayn, and nine from the lineage of al-Husayn (A), the ninth of whom will be the guided one, the one who will rise up. They will never separate from Allah's Book, nor will it separate from them, until they meet the Prophet at the Heavenly Fount.⁸

أنا والحسن والحسين والتسعة من ولد الحسين عليهم السلام، تاسعهم مهديهم وقائمهم، لا يفارقون كتاب الله ولا يفارقهم حتى يردا على رسول الله حوضه.

Another report adds,

When someone puts them at the forefront, they will lead him to Paradise; and when someone forsakes them, they will drive him into the Fire.⁹

من جعلهما أمامه، قاداه إلى الجنة، ومن جعلهما خلفه ساقاه إلى النار.

An extensively narrated (*mustafid*) tradition says,

My household is like the ark of Noah – whoever climbs aboard will be saved, and whoever lags behind will drown.¹⁰

إن مثل أهل بيتي كمثل سفينة نوح، من ركبها نجا ومن تخلف عنها غرق.

It is narrated in *al-Kafi* that Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

The Prophet (S) said, 'I will be the first to come before the Mighty, the All-Compeller on the Day of Resurrection with His Book and my household, followed by my community. Then I will ask them, 'What did you do with the Book of Allah and my household?''¹¹

قال رسول الله (ص): أنا أول وافد على العزيز الجبار يوم القيامة، وكتابه وأهل بيتي ثم أمّتي ثم أسألكم ما فعلتم بكتاب الله وأهل بيتي.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) narrates from his forefathers (A):

The Prophet (S) said, 'O people, you are in a world that is at a temporary peace [*hudnah*, lit. 'ceasefire' or 'truce'] in the midst of a rapidly moving journey. You have seen the way that the night and the day, and the sun and the moon, wear away all that is new, and bring closer all that is far, and bring forth every promise. So prepare for the long crossing.'

Miqdad ibn al-Aswad stood and asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, what is this world which is at a temporary peace?'

He replied, 'It is the time to grow and cut off [from this world]. When trials overcome you, like the dark night sky, then you must hold tightly to the Qur'an, for it is an intercessor whose mediation is effective, and a solicitor whose testimony is true. When someone places it at the forefront, it will lead him to Paradise; and when someone forsakes it, it will drive him to the Fire.

'It is a signpost that points to the best way, and it is a book containing details, elucidation, and knowledge. It is the criterion, not to be taken lightly. It has both an exterior as well as a hidden interior. Its outer is law, and its inner is knowledge. Its outer is systematic, and its inner is

deep. It has underlying depths, within which are yet farther depths. Its wonders cannot be enumerated, nor its marvels fathomed. It contains the lamp of guidance and the lighthouse of wisdom. It is a guide to knowledge for those who know what knowledge is. So let him sharpen his sight so his gaze may rest upon true knowledge, and he can be saved from ruin and be freed from danger. Indeed reflection gives life to the heart of the insightful person, just as light helps someone find his way in the darkness. So ensure that your freedom [from worldly attachments] is effective and your delays are few.¹²

قال: قال رسول الله (ص): أيها الناس إنكم في دار هدنة، وأنتم على ظهر سفر، والسير بكم سريع، وقد رأيتم الليل والنهار، والشمس والقمر يلبيان كل جديد، ويقربان كل بعيد، ويأتیان بكل موعود، فأعدوا الجهاز لبعدها الجاهز.

قال: فقام المقداد بن الاسود فقال: يا رسول الله ما دار هدنة؟

قال: دار بلاغ وانقطاع، فإذا التيسر عليكم الفتن كقطع الليل المظلم، فعليكم بالقرآن، فانه شافع مشفع، وماحل مصدق، من جعله أمامه قاده إلى الجنة، ومن جعله خلفه ساقه إلى النار، وهو الدليل يدل على خير سبيل، وهو كتاب فيه تفصيل وبيان وتحصيل، وهو الفصل ليس بالهزل، وله ظهر وبطن، فظاهره حكم، وباطنه علم، ظاهره أنيق، وباطنه عميق له تخوم وعلى تخومه تخوم، لا تحصى عجائبه ولا تبلى غرائبه، فيه مصابيح الهدى، ومنار الحكمة، ودليل على المعرفة لمن عرف الصفة، فليجل جال بصره، وليبلغ الصفة نظره ينج من عطب، ويخلص من نشب، فإن التفكير حياة قلب البصير كما يمشي المستنير في الظلمات بالنور، فعليكم بحسن التخلص وقلة التريص.

He also relates that the Prophet (S) said,

The Qur'an is a guide against deviation, a clear distinction against blindness, stability from stumbling, a light in the darkness, clarity in mishaps, immunity from destruction, a mature guide against temptation, a clear stance against corruption, and the means to the end from this world to the next. In it lies the perfection of your religion, and no sooner does someone stray away from it than they head towards the Fire.¹³

القرآن هدى من الضلالة، وتبيان من العمى، واستقالة من العثرة، ونور من الظلمة، وضياء من

الاجداث، وعصمة من المهلكة، ورشد من الغواية، وبيان من الفتن، وبلاغ من الدنيا إلى الآخرة، وفيه كمال دينكم، وما عدل أحد من القرآن إلا إلى النار.

It is related that the infallible Imams (A) said,

Whoever does not recognise our authority through the Qur'an has failed to escape calamity.¹⁴

من لم يعرف أمرنا من القرآن لم يتكفب الفتن.

✽

Whenever someone takes his religion from the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet (S), his faith will outlive the mountains. Whenever someone takes his religion from the mouths of people, these same people will refute him.¹⁵

من أخذ دينه من كتاب الله وسنة نبيه (ص) زالت الجبال قبل أن يزول، ومن أخذ دينه من أفواه الرجال رده الرجل.

After quoting this latter narration, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni said,

This is why so many corrupt religions have sprung up in our time; these false sects fulfil all the conditions necessary to be called infidelity (*kufir*) or polytheism. This is because Allah either blesses or thwarts people.

Whenever Allah wills someone to be successful, and for his faith to be firm, He orchestrates circumstances that will lead him to take his religion from the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet (S) with knowledge, conviction, and insight. This makes his faith firmer than towering mountains.

But whenever – Allah forbid! – Allah wishes to thwart someone and cut short his false religion, He makes a way for him to follow his own estimation of what is good, to blindly imitate others, and to engage in esoteric interpretation (*ta'wil*) without any knowledge or insight. It is in the hands of Allah. He, the Blessed and Exalted, may choose to perfect or to remove his faith. He has no guarantee. In the morning, he may be a believer but, in the evening, a disbeliever; or vice versa.

For whenever he sees someone influential, he is swayed towards him; and whenever he sees something that seems good on the outside, he accepts it.

The Imam (A) said, 'Allah, the Exalted, created the prophets to be prophets, and they cannot be anything other than prophets. He created their vicegerents to be vicegerents, so they cannot be anything but vicegerents. However, he has only lent their followers their faith. If He wills, He will complete it for them; and if He wills, He will take it from them. As the Qur'an says, "there is the eternal abode and the temporary lodging" (6:98).'¹⁶

إن الله تعالى خلق النبيين على النبوة فلا يكونون إلا أنبياء، وخلق الأوصياء على الوصية فلا يكونون إلا أوصياء، وأعار قوماً إيماناً، فإن شاء تممه لهم وإن شاء سلبهم إياه، قال: وفيهم جرى قوله: فمستقر ومستودع.

Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari relates,

When Allah revealed the verse 'O you who have faith! Obey Allah, and obey the Prophet, and those vested with authority among you' (4:59), I asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, we know Allah and His Messenger, but who are the ones vested with authority whose obedience He has bound with yours?'

He replied, "They are my successors, Jabir, the leaders of the Muslims after me. The first of them is 'Ali ibn Abi Talib; then al-Hasan; then al-Husayn; then 'Ali ibn al-Husayn; then Muhammad ibn 'Ali, known in the Torah as "al-Baqir". You will meet him, Jabir, and when you do, pass on my greeting to him.

'After him will be Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq, then Musa ibn Ja'far, then 'Ali ibn Musa, then Muhammad ibn 'Ali, then 'Ali ibn Muhammad, then al-Hasan ibn 'Ali, and then the one with my name and patronymic (*kunyah*). He will be the proof of Allah on His earth and His last vestige among His servants. Through him, the son of al-Hasan ibn 'Ali, Allah will spread His remembrance throughout the earth, east and west. He is the one who will be hidden from his followers, and his absence will be such that only those whose hearts Allah will have tested for faith will remain firm in their belief in his imamate.'

I asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, will his followers be able to benefit from him during his absence?'

He replied, 'Yes. By the One who made me a prophet, they will be enlightened by his light and benefit from his guardianship over them even in his absence, just like people benefit from the sun even when the clouds cover it. O Jabir, this is a hidden secret of Allah, a treasured piece of knowledge, so conceal it from everyone except those worthy of it.'¹⁷

لما أنزل الله على نبيه (ص): ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ﴾ قلت: يا رسول الله عرفنا الله ورسوله فمن أولو الأمر الذين قرن الله طاعتهم بطاعتك؟ فقال (ص): هم خلفائي يا جابر وأئمة المسلمين من بعدي: أولهم علي بن أبي طالب، ثم الحسن، ثم الحسين، ثم علي بن الحسين، ثم محمد بن علي المعروف في التوراة بالباقر، ستدرکه يا جابر فإذا لقيته فأقرئه مني السلام، ثم الصادق جعفر بن محمد، ثم موسى بن جعفر، ثم علي بن موسى، ثم محمد بن علي، ثم علي بن محمد، ثم الحسن بن علي، كني وسمي حجة الله في أرضه وبقية في عبادته ابن الحسن بن علي، ذاك الذي يفتح الله تعالى ذكره على يده مشارق الأرض و مغاربها، ذاك الذي يغيب عن شيعته و أوليائه غيبة لا يثبت فيها على القول بإمامته إلا من امتحن الله قلبه للإيمان.

قال جابر: فقلت له يا رسول الله، فهل ينتفع شيعته به في غيبته قال (ص) إي و الذي بعثني بالنبوة يستضيئون بنوره، و ينتفعون بولايته في غيبته، كانتفاع الناس بالشمس و إن تجللها سحاب، يا جابر هذا من مكنون سرّ الله و مخزون علم الله فاكمه إلا عن أهله.

Teaching the tenets of faith to the youth

Know that people fall into different categories in their understanding and acceptance of the tenets of faith; they are not all at one level. Allah only tasks His servants in proportion to the intellect, understanding, and capacity that He has endowed them with.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Believers are at different stages of belief. Some are at the first or second; others at the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, or seventh. If you

impose the second stage of belief on someone who only has the first, he will not be able to bear it. Nor can you impose the third stage of belief on someone who only has the second, for he will also be unable to bear it.¹⁸

إنَّ المؤمنين على منازل، منهم على واحدة، ومنهم على اثنتين ومنهم على ثلاث، ومنهم على أربع، ومنهم على خمس، ومنهم على ستّ، ومنهم على سبع، فلو ذهبت تحمل على صاحب الواحدة اثنتين لم يقو، و على صاحب الاثنتين ثلاثاً لم يقو.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Faith has different states, degrees, stages, and stations. Some people have completed all the stages, and others are obviously lacking in faith, while still others fluctuate from one extreme to the other.¹⁹

الإيمان حالات ودرجات وطبقات ومنازل، فمنه التام المنتهي تمامه، ومنه الناقص البين نقصانه، ومنه الرّاجح الزايد رجحانه.



If people knew how Allah brought creation into being, they would never disparage each other.²⁰

لو علم الناس كيف خلق الله هذا الخلق لم يلم أحد أحداً.

It is essential that a young person be introduced to the tenets of the faith as soon as he is mature and able to distinguish right from wrong. First, he should memorize them; he can gradually uncover the meanings of these beliefs as he grows up. Begin with memorization; then understanding; and then belief, conviction, and confirmation.

This can be done with youngsters without needing to furnish proofs since Allah has graced the heart by readying it for faith at the first onset of maturity without any need for evidence or proofs. No one could argue with this, since all people acquire their basic beliefs first

through dictation and elementary instruction.

True, faith acquired through imitation has a certain initial weakness, and it may falter if a refutation is encountered. Therefore, faith must be strengthened and reinforced in the youngster and layperson alike so they are brought up with it and it does not shake. The way to do that is not to teach them how to argue and engage in theological debate. Rather, they should occupy themselves with reciting the Qur'an and its exegesis, reading the *hadith* and their meanings, and performing the required acts of worship.

Their faith will never cease to strengthen. It will take root deeper and deeper because of the signs and proofs they hear in the Qur'an and the evidence and benefits they see in the *hadith*. Light will shine on them due to their worship. They will find joy in meeting and sitting with fellow righteous people and admire their characteristics, lifestyle, humility, fear of Allah, and trust in Allah.

Memorizing the basic beliefs is like planting a seed in the heart. These additional acts water the seed and provide fertile soil for it to sprout in until it grows up into a good, strong tree, with firm roots and branches stretching out to the sky.

The youngster must also protect his ears from argument and theological debate, for such debate disturbs a person's faith more than it establishes it, and it does more harm than good. Watching how they deconstruct everything proves this in and of itself. Compare the faith of the righteous people and pious laypeople with the faith of these disputants and scholastic theologians. You will see that the layperson's faith is as firm as a soaring

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mountain, unshaken by disasters or thunderbolts. However, the faith of the scholastic theologian – who safeguards his faith with the points of his debate – is like a string floating in the air, blown every which way by the wind. The only exception is when someone hears a proof for his faith and absorbs it through imitation just as he acquired his faith through imitation in the first place. There is no difference between learning a proof or learning what is being proved [that is, an article of faith] in an imitative fashion, for absorbing an established proof of one's faith is one thing, while forging one's own opinions about it is quite another.

If a youngster is taught these tenets of faith, then even if, when he grows older, he becomes busy with worldly pursuits and does not develop these basic tenets any further, at least these correct beliefs will keep him safe in the next world since the divine law does not require people to do anything more than confidently affirm the basic aspects of these tenets. It does not require investigation, discussion, or argumentation.

If, however, he wants to be one of those who traverses the path to the Hereafter and is worthy of that; and if he is blessed with the chance to engage in good works; and if he continually reveres Allah, fights his lower desires, and exerts his efforts in spiritual training, then the doors of guidance will be opened to him. The truths of his faith will be disclosed to him through a divine light which will be cast into his heart as a result of his efforts, in fulfilment of Allah's promise in the Qur'an:

As for those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them in Our ways. (29:69)

This precious jewel is the ultimate goal of the Truthful

and those brought near to Allah. He will attain degrees of faith in proportion to his outer efforts and inner purification from anything other than Allah, as well as the enlightenment his conviction brings him.

This is just like how people differ in their understanding of the secrets of medicine, or the religious sciences – or any other sciences. They exert different levels of effort and vary in their intelligence, sharpness, and natural talents. Just as these levels vary limitlessly, so too do the levels of faith.

As for which specific tenets of faith the elite must hold, and how to attain them, we have already explained this in the third chapter of our first treatise.

The minimum requirement for belief

Nasir al-Din Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi – the great scholar and champion of the saved sect, may he rest in peace – said,

The least that a sane and responsible person must believe in is the implications of ‘There is no god but Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’. If he believes in the Messenger, he must necessarily – without any further proof or elaboration – believe in the attributes of Allah, the Last Day, and the appointment of the infallible Imam because all of these are included in the Qur’an.

Regarding the divine attributes, a person must believe that Allah is Ever-Living (*hayy*), Omnipotent (*qadir*), Omniscient (*‘alim*); and that He wills (*murid*), speaks (*mutakallim*), and is unique. Regarding the Hereafter, he must believe in Heaven and Hell, the bridge of *sirat*,²¹ the scales, the reckoning, intercession, and similar things. He does not have to research the reality of the attributes further – for instance, to explore whether His speech and knowledge are created or eternal attributes. If he dies without these things ever crossing his mind, he will still die a believer. If his heart is ever struck by doubt, or he finds

certain beliefs problematic, he must – if possible – dispel them via simple theological proofs – even if these proofs are too weak to satisfy the theologians – for that would be sufficient, and he would have no need to delve into further proofs.

For a proof can only be established when the doubt and refutation have been stated. Once the doubt has been stated, there is no guarantee that it will not stick to his mind and heart. He might even imagine it is valid if he is unable to grasp its refutation, for the doubt may be apparent and conspicuous, but the refutation subtle and incomprehensible to his intellect. For this reason, these investigations and dialectical debates are reprimanded – bearing in mind that this reprimand is for the weaker laypeople, and not religious scholars who can delve into the deepest obscurities.

Prohibiting laypeople from engaging in dialectic debate is no different from forbidding children from playing on the banks of the Tigris for fear they might drown. An exception for the strong [minded] is like the exception for an expert swimmer, except that this is an area where a person might be deceived, and his feet may slip. A person who is intellectually weak might presume he can comprehend all the realities, and that he is actually one of the strong. He might then dive in and drown in the sea of folly without even realizing. The correct thing would be to prevent everyone from it, except for rare and exceptional individuals – and, in any era, there might be only one or two who could go beyond the typical way that the scholars treat faith, with respect to what has been revealed by Allah and narrated from the Prophet (S); for whoever delves deeply into these matters puts himself in a very tasking position.

When the Prophet (S) saw his companions dive into dialectical debate, his cheeks flushed from anger, and he said, 'Is this what you have been commanded? You are using parts of the Book to refute other parts! Look into it carefully, act upon what Allah has commanded, and refrain from what He has prohibited.'²²

أفبهذا أمرتم؟ تضربون كتاب الله بعضها ببعض، انظروا ما أمركم الله به فافعلوا، وما نهاكم عنه فانتهوا.

This is a caution to follow the right way.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

Be conscious of Allah, and go wherever you will, and be among whatever people you choose. No one disagrees about God-consciousness. A person who is conscious of Allah will be liked by all groups of people, for he will have all good and maturity...

Follow the principles of the faith and realities of true conviction, Allah's pleasure, and submission to the divine that the people of purity and God-consciousness have agreed upon. Do not enter disputes or engage in controversial matters with people, for that will cause difficulty for you. The chosen nation (*ummah*) concurs that Allah is one and unique, that He rules justly, that He does what He wills, and He governs according to His will. No one asks why He fashions what He does. There has never been – and never will be – anything that He does not will, and He can do whatever He wills. His promise [of divine reward] and threat [of divine punishment] are true. The Qur'an is His Word. He existed before the cosmos and before there was any place or time. Creation and annihilation are the same to Him: when He creates something, it does not increase His knowledge; and when something passes on, it does not reduce His kingdom. Mighty is His Dominion, and majestic His glory.

So if someone brings you something that falls short of this fundamental truth, do not accept it. Devote your inner self to it, and you will see its blessings close at hand and succeed among the victors.²³

اتق الله وكن حيث شئت ومن أي قوم شئت، فانه لا خلاف لاحد في التقوى، والمتقي محبوب عند كل فريق، وفيه جماع كل خير ورشد الى ان قال:

فالزم ماأجمع عليه أهل الصفاء والتقى، من اصول الدين وحقائق اليقين والرضا والتسليم، ولا تدخل في اختلاف الخلق ومقالاتهم، فيعصب عليك، وقد اجتمعت الامة المختارة بأن الله واحد ليس كمثله شيء، وأنه عدل في حكمه يفعل مايشاء ويحكم ما يريد، ولا يقال له في شيء من صنعته: لِمَ؟ ولا كان ولا يكون شيء إلا بمشيئته، وأنه قادر على مايشاء، وصادق في وعده ووعيده، وأنه كان قبل الكون والمكان والزمان، وأن إحدائه وإفنائيه غيره سواء لا يزداد باحدائه علما، ولا ينقص بفنائيه ملكه، عزّ سلطانه وجلّ سبحانه.

فمن أورد عليك ما ينقض هذا الأصل فلا تقبله، وجرد باطنك لذلك، ترى بركاته وتفوز مع الفائزين.

Secrets guarded by those with knowledge

Know that those with knowledge (*'ulama'*) guard certain secrets from the masses because they do not have sufficient intellect or understanding to fathom them. These are things like the reality of the Spirit (*al-ruh*), which is from the higher spiritual realm (*al-malakut*). Since the masses do not have enough knowledge to understand all of this world (*'alam al-mulk*), if these people disclose such a thing, it will be a trial for them. Allah says:

They question you concerning the Spirit. Say, 'The Spirit is of the command of my Lord, and you have not been given of the knowledge except a few [of you]. (17:85)

There are other understandable secrets which themselves would not overtax the mind, but mentioning them would harm most people – hence, the prohibition on divulging them. The secret of destiny is one such secret. It is not far-fetched to think that mentioning such realities would harm some people, just as bright sunlight damages bats' eyes, and the scent of roses harms dung beetles.

Some knowledge might not be harmful and might be readily understood but still be couched in metaphors and hints so it would affect the listener's heart more, and so the listener would appreciate its effect on his heart more. For instance, someone might say metaphorically, 'I saw so-and-so hanging pearls around the necks of swine in order to conceal a piece of knowledge or wisdom from someone unworthy of it. While a mere listener would take that at face value, a discerning investigator would look

and see that that person has neither pearls nor swine with him, and so he would realize there is a hidden meaning and a secret to be understood. This is how people are sifted from one another.

This is similar to a narration which says,

Does the person who raises his head [in prayer] before the *imam* not fear that Allah will turn his head into a donkey's head?²⁴

أما يخشى الذي رفع رأسه قبل الامام أن يحول الله رأسه رأس حمار؟

This has never happened literally and never will. It is meant to be a metaphor for the donkey's proverbial, characteristic stupidity and foolishness. This is what is meant, not the literal meaning. It is a metaphor to say that it is foolish to follow [the *imam*] while simultaneously going ahead of him, because these two are mutually contradictory. This type of knowledge relies on allegorical expression through a metaphor that would encompass the crux of the matter.

Another example is when Allah says:

Then He turned to the heaven, and it was smoke, and He said to it and to the earth, 'Come, willingly or unwillingly!' They said, 'We come willingly.' (41:11)

His command to obey and their obedient response illustrate Allah's power over them – and their intrinsic acceptance of His power.

Similar are His words:

We only say 'Be' to a thing, when We will it, and it is. (16:40)

This is an inner type of speech which requires no words or voice. Other similar examples are the metaphor of the *sirat* being a bridge stretched between Heaven and Hell, and the balance with two scales on either side.

Also similar is when people have a rudimentary understanding of a thing and then comprehend it in detail and experience it; then the knowledge becomes part of them. These two types of knowledge differ in that one is the shell, and the other the core; one is superficial, and the other deep. As an example, a person may see someone in the dark or in the distance and attain a certain degree of knowledge. But when he sees him up close, or when the darkness is dispelled, it is completely different. His latter knowledge does not contradict his former; rather, it completes it. This is the case with knowledge, faith, action, and most of the tenets of our faith.

Blind following

Regarding the verse 'and among them are the illiterate who know nothing of the Book except hearsay' (2:78), the *tafsir* attributed to Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (A) says,

A man asked Imam al-Sadiq (A), 'If this group of Jews only knew what they had heard from their scholars about their book, and they had no other way to learn, how could Allah reproach them for following their scholars and accepting what they said? Were they not like our masses who also follow their scholars? If the Jews were not allowed to simply accept what their scholars said, then why are our people allowed to simply accept what their scholars say?'

He replied, 'Our laypeople and their scholars are both similar to and different from the Jewish laypeople and their scholars. Both are similar in that Allah has reproached them for blindly following their scholars. However, this is where they differ.'

The man asked, 'Please explain further, O son of the Messenger of Allah.'

He said, 'The Jewish masses knew that their scholars blatantly lied, consumed forbidden food, took bribes, and changed their rulings when faced with a special advocate, flattery, or sycophancy. They

also knew their scholars were so prejudiced that they became sectarian. Under the influence of their prejudice, they would unjustly seize the rights of those they discriminated against and give their partisans property and other things they did not deserve. They knew their scholars succumbed to unlawful temptations and allowed themselves to commit sins – whereas, if laypeople had committed the same sins, they would have been branded as shameful – even though they knew that Allah did not have one set of rules for them and another set for those who mediate between Him and His creation.

‘This is why He approached them – because they continued to blindly follow those whose reality they knew full well. They knew it was not permissible to accept reports from such people, nor to believe their stories, nor to act on what they said about things they themselves had not seen. They should have independently considered the Prophet’s (S) message and command because his proofs were undeniably obvious.

‘The same is true for our masses, if they know that their scholars are outwardly corrupt or intensely prejudiced, or they see them fighting over worldly or unlawful gains, destroying those they are prejudiced against – even if they deserve help in improving their affairs – conferring favours and generosity upon their partisans although they deserve to be humbled and reproved. If any of our laypeople follow such scholars blindly, they will be just like the Jews whom Allah reproached for blindly following their corrupt desires.

‘However, if a scholar is careful with his own self, safeguards his religion, opposes his personal whims, and obeys the His Master’s command, then the masses should follow him. This is true for only some Shi’a scholars, not all of them. If one of them embarks upon shamelessness and immorality, he will carry along our community’s corrupt people, so do not accept anything they narrate to you about us, not even out of respect.²⁵

قال رجل للصادق (ع): إذا كان هؤلاء القوم من اليهود لا يعرفون الكتاب الا بما يسمعون من علمائهم لا سبيل لهم إلى غيره، فكيف ذمهم الله بتقليدهم، والقبول من علمائهم، وهل عوام اليهود الا كعوامنا يقلدون علمائهم؟ فإذا لم يجوز لاولئك القبول من علمائهم لم يجوز هؤلاء القبول من علمائهم؟

فقال (ع): بين عوامنا وعلماننا وبين عوام اليهود وعلماهم فرق من جهة وتسوية من جهة فأمّا من حيث استروا فان الله قد ذمّ عوامنا بتقليدهم علماهم كما ذمّ عوامهم وأما من حيث افترقوا فلا. قال: بين لي يابن رسول الله.

قال (ع): ان عوام اليهود كانوا قد عرفوا علماءهم بالكذب الصُّرَّاح، وبأكل الحرام والرّشا، وبتغيير الاحكام عن واجبها بالشفاعات، والعنايات، والمصانعات، وعرفوهم بالتعصب الشديد الذي يفارقون به أديانهم، وأنهم إذا تعصبوا، أزالوا حقوق من تعصبوا عليه، وأعطوا ما لا يستحقه من تعصبوا له من أموال غيرهم، وظلموهم من أجلهم، وعرفوهم يقارفون المحرمات، واضطروا بمعارف قلوبهم إلى أن من فعل ما يفعلونه فهو فاسق، لا يجوز أن يصدق على الله، ولا على الوسائط بين الخلق وبين الله، فلذلك ذمهم لما قلّدوا مَنْ قد عرفوا، وَمَنْ قد علموا، أنه لا يجوز قبول خبره، ولا تصديقه في حكايته، ولا العمل بما يؤديه إليهم عن لم يشاهدوه، ووجب عليهم النظر بأنفسهم في أمر رسول الله (ص)، إذ كانت دلائله أوضح من أن تخفى، وأشهر من أن لا تظهر لهم.

وكذلك عوام أمتنا إذا عرفوا من فقهاءهم الفسق الظاهر، والعصبية الشديدة، والتكالب على حطام الدنيا وحرامها، وإهلاك من يتعصبون عليه، وإن كان لإصلاح أمره مستحقاً، وبالترفق بالبرّ والإحسان على من تعصبوا له، وإن كان للإذلال والإهانة مستحقاً، فمن قلّد من عوامنا مثل هؤلاء الفقهاء، فهم مثل اليهود الذين ذمهم الله بالتقليد لفسقة علماهم.

فأمّا من كان من الفقهاء صائناً لنفسه، حافظاً لدينه، مخالفاً هواه، مطيعاً لأمر مولاه، فللعوام أن يقلّدوه. وذلك لا يكون إلّا بعض فقهاء الشيعة لا جميعهم، فإن من ركب القبائح والفواحش مراكب فسقة العامة فلا تقبلوا منهم عتاً شيئاً، ولا كرامة لهم.

Notes

¹ *Fitrah*: man's innate nature that he was created with. Also used to denote something that he is pre-disposed to.

² al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 15.

³ al-Daylami, *Irshad al-Qulub* (n.l.: n.d.), p. 8.

⁴ al-Shaykh al-Saduq (Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Babawayh al-Qummi),

Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni'mah, (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islami al-Tabi'ah li Jama'at al-Mudarrisin bi Qum al-Musharrafah, 1405 AH), vol. 1, p. 240.

⁵ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 239; al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 23, p. 133.

⁶ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 23, p. 109.

⁷ al-Saduq, *Kamal al-Din*, vol. 1, p. 236.

⁸ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 240.

⁹ A similar narration is in al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 599.

¹⁰ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 23, p. 105.

¹¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 600.

¹² Ibid., vol. 2, p. 598.

¹³ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 600.

¹⁴ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 7.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, pp. 7-8

¹⁷ al-Saduq, *Kamal al-Din*, vol. 1, p. 253.

¹⁸ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 45.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 34.

²⁰ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 44.

²¹ *al-sirat*: a bridge outstretched over Hellfire, which people will have to cross on the Day of Judgment in order to enter Paradise. Traditions describe it as being thinner than a hair and sharper than a sword.

²² A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary texts of *hadith*. However, the narration has also been mentioned by al-Naraqī in *Jami' al-Sa'adat*.

²³ (Attributed to) Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (A), *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lami li al-Matbu'at, 1980, 1st ed.), p. 59

²⁴ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 1, p. 94.

²⁵ al-Tabarsi, *al-Ihtijaj*, vol. 2, pp. 262-263.

❖ Self-Knowledge ❖

Introduction

By the 'self' (*nafs*), we mean the subtle, immaterial essence that uses the physical body to fulfil its needs the way a master uses his servants. This is the essence of man – his reality that knows higher truths; it has physical assistants in the form of limbs in the body, and spiritual assistants in the form of the human faculties. Allah says:

In the earth are signs for those who have conviction, and in your souls [as well]. Will you not then perceive? (51:21)

Our Prophet (S) said,

He who knows his own self knows his Lord.¹

من عرف نفسه فقد عرف ربه.



The person who knows his self the best is he who best knows his Lord.²

أعرفكم بنفسه أعرّفكم برّبه.

This immaterial essence may be called the 'spirit' (*ruh*) because the body's life body depends on it. It may also be called the 'heart' (*qalb*) because of its changing (*taqallub*) thoughts. It may also be called the 'intellect' (*aql*) because it acquires knowledge and experiences realizations. These

four terms are also used to express other meanings and are known as the 'spiritual entities' (*qara'in*).

There are also other descriptions for the self, in accordance with its various conditions. When it is at peace with the [divine] commands and prohibitions, and it no longer feels agitated because it has resisted its carnal desires, it is called the 'serene soul' (*al-nafs al-mutama'innah*). Allah says:

O tranquil soul! Return to your Lord, pleased, pleasing! (89:28)

If it has not yet achieved this tranquillity but fights its base desires and anger, it is called the 'self-reproaching soul' (*al-nafs al-lawwamah*) since it reproaches its owner when he falls short in worshipping his Master. Allah says:

And I swear by the self-reproaching soul! (75:2)

If it stops resisting and instead yields to and obeys its base desires and Satan's insinuations, it is called the 'soul that incites evil' (*al-nafs al-ammarah bi al-su'*). Allah says that Joseph (A) said:

Yet I do not absolve my [inciting] soul, for the [inciting] soul indeed prompts [men] to evil. (12:53)

Anger and desire

Know that the forces of anger and desire can be made entirely subservient to the heart, and they can assist it on the path it travels and be good companions on its journey. However, they may also revolt against it defiantly and rebelliously until they destroy and subjugate it, in which case it will perish and be wrenched from its journey towards eternal salvation and bliss.

The heart has another force, and that is knowledge,

wisdom, and reflection. It is best for it to seek the aid of this force, for it is Allah's force over the other two which may fall under the influence of satanic forces. If someone abandons this aid, and the forces of anger and desire take control of his soul, he will be doomed to perish and will completely lose. This is the condition of most people, for their intellects become subservient to their base desires, and they exploit them only to concoct plans to fulfil their base desires – whereas the desires should be subservient to their intellects and used to achieve their intellects' goals.

The four inner qualities

Know that the human constitution and nature is made of four qualities which result in the different human characteristics. These qualities are the predatory, animalistic, satanic, and divine qualities.

When anger overpowers a person, he behaves like a predator, expressing animosity and hatred towards people and attacking them physically and verbally.

When his carnal desires overpower him, he behaves like an animal: greedily, gluttonously, and lustfully.

Since the divine command is in the self – as Allah says in the Qur'an: 'Say, "The spirit is of the command of my Lord"' (17:85) – he assumes divinity for himself and loves mastership, superiority, exclusivity, and monopoly over everything. He wants to be peerless like the divine and to be freed from the noose of subservience of humbleness. He craves knowledge of everything. In fact, he claims to have knowledge, wisdom, and awareness of the realities of all things. He is delighted when he is associated with knowledge and grieved when he is associated with

ignorance. These desires – to master all truths and forcibly impose one's self upon others – are qualities of lordship which man covets.

When the human self distinguishes itself from the animals – with whom it shares the animalistic faculties of anger and desire – a satanic force arises in him. He becomes evil and uses this distinction [from animals] to concoct various plots and schemes, and uses deception, cunning, and artifice to achieve his ends. This evil appears good, and this is how the satanic forces act.

Every person has a mixture of these four qualities – the divine, the satanic, the predatory, and the animalistic – and they combine in the heart and interact to result in a pig, a dog, a devil (*shaytan*), or a sage (*hakim*) in human form.

The pig personifies lustful desire, for pigs are not contemptible because of their colour, shape, or form, but rather because of their gluttony, avidity, and greed.

The dog personifies anger, for ferocious predators and savage dogs are not called predators because of their colour or form, but rather because the spirit of the word 'predator' indicates ferociousness, rapaciousness, and animosity.

Man possesses inside himself the rapacity and rage of a predator as well as the greed and gluttony of a pig. The pig, through its lustful greed, incites him towards indecency and wrongdoing; and the predator, through its anger, incites him towards injustice and harm.

The devil inside him constantly excites the pig's lust and the predator's rage. It sets them against each other and makes their intrinsic nature appear good to them.

The sage – which is the intellect personified – has been

ordered to resist the devil's plots and tricks by exposing the devil's deceit with its sharp insight and its clear bright light. It must thwart the pig's greed by controlling it with the dog, for the intensity of desire can only be broken by the severity of anger. It must then combat the ferociousness of the dog by controlling it with the pig. Then it must subjugate both of them under its own leadership.

If the inner sage manages to do this, all the person's faculties will become balanced. Justice will be restored to the realm of the body, and the entire person will walk upon the straight path.

If, however, the intellect fails to conquer these faculties, they will overpower it instead and use the intellect to scheme and concoct deceitful and intricate plans to indulge the pig and gratify the dog. The intellect will remain forever enslaved to the dog and the pig, and this is the case with most people, whose primary concerns are gratifying their stomachs and genitals and disputing with each other.

The consequences of obeying desire and anger

Obeying the pig – the desires – results in characteristics such as insolence, obscenity, wastefulness, stinginess, showing off, shamelessness, impudence, frivolity, greed, covetousness, flattery, jealousy, and malice.

Obeying the dog – anger – gives rise to other characteristics in the heart, such as rashness, depravity, extravagance, bragging, fury, arrogance, self-admiration, scorn, taunting, disdain, belittling others, evil intentions, and the desire to wrong others.

Obeying the devil through following anger and the

desires results in characteristics such as deceitfulness, fraud, trickery, slyness, swindling, pretence, cheating, deception, and rudeness.

If the situation is reversed, however, and all the faculties are controlled by the divine faculty, divine virtues settle in the heart – divine virtues such as knowledge, wisdom, conviction, comprehension of and insight into the realities of things. Mastery over such matters through the power of knowledge and insight, and well-deserved preference over people, which is the *raison d'être* and sublimeness of knowledge, will also settle in the heart. The heart will be free from being bound to the base desires and anger, and, by restraining the pig-like desire and restoring inner equilibrium, the heart will be filled with noble characteristics such as chastity, contentment, tranquillity, restraint, piety, God-consciousness, serenity, composure, modesty, gracefulness, and helpfulness. When the faculty of anger is restrained, overpowered, and pushed back to its least necessary level, this gives rise to characteristics such as courage, generosity, bravery, self-restraint, patience, clemency, tolerance, forgiveness, stability, nobleness, gallantry, and dignity.

The heart is like a mirror that is surrounded by all these qualities which are reflected in it and whose effects enter it one after another.

The praiseworthy qualities that we mentioned make the mirror clearer, shinier, and brighter and increase its light until the splendour of the truth glistens in it and it reveals the reality of a religious matter when it is sought. This is the type of heart that the Prophet (S) was referring to when he said,

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

He whose heart is mentor to him has been granted a protector by Allah.³

من كان له من قلبه واعظ كان عليه من الله حافظ.



When Allah wills goodness for His servant, He makes his heart a mentor for him.⁴

إذا اراد الله بعبده خيراً جعل له واعظاً من قلبه.

This is the type of heart that finds peace in the remembrance of Allah; as Allah says:

Truly, the hearts find rest in Allah's remembrance. (13:28)

However, the vile traits are like a dark smoke that envelops the mirror of the heart. Step by step, it accumulates on the heart until the heart becomes blackened and dark, completely veiled from Allah. This is known as the seal on the heart, or rust on the heart. Allah says,

No indeed! Rather their hearts have been sullied. (83:14)

If We wish We will punish them for their sins, and set a seal on their hearts so they will not hear. (7:100)

He connects their inability to hear with the sealing of their hearts because of their sins, just as He connects their ability to hear with God-consciousness:

Be conscious of Allah and listen. (5:108)

So be wary of Allah and obey me. (26:108)

Be wary of Allah and Allah shall teach you. (2:282)

As sins accumulate, the heart becomes sealed. When that happens, it becomes blind to the realization of the truth and the benefit of religion. The person will belittle

the Hereafter and exaggerate the worldly life, which will become his sole preoccupation. If any mention of the Hereafter and its dangers strike this person's ears, it will go in one ear and out the other, neither lingering in his heart, nor pushing him to repent or make amends for his sins. These are the people who have given up on the Hereafter, just like the infidels have given up on their deceased. This is what is meant by 'blackening of the heart through sins', as is related in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

'Faith appears like a white glow [in the heart], and when a servant [of Allah] performs good deeds, it grows and increases until the whole heart becomes white. Hypocrisy appears like a black speck, and when someone sins, it grows larger until the entire heart becomes black, and it is sealed firmly.'

Then he recited the verse: 'No indeed! Rather their hearts have been sullied.' (83:14)⁵

إن الإيمان ليبدو لمعة بيضاء، فإذا عمل العبد الصالحات ثما فزاد، حتى يبيض القلب كله، وإن النفاق ليبدو نقطة سوداء، فإذا انتهك الحرمات زادت، حتى يسود القلب كله فيطبع على قلبه فذلك الختم، وتلا: ﴿كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ﴾.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

There are three types of hearts. There is the upside-down heart which does not feel anything good, and this is the heart of the disbeliever. There is the heart which has a black spot in it. In it, good and evil constantly wrestle, and whichever one the heart inclines towards will be victorious. And there is the open heart. Glistening in it are lanterns whose light will never falter until the Day of Resurrection; that is the heart of the believer.⁶

إن القلوب ثلاثة: قلب منكوس لا يعي شيئاً من الخير وهو قلب الكافر، وقلب فيه نقطة سوداء والخير والشر فيه يعتلجان فأيهما كانت منه غلب عليه، وقلب مفتوح فيه مصابيح ترهر، ولا يطفأ

نوره إلى يوم القيامة وهو قلب المؤمن.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

'At some time in the day or night, the heart can be void of both faith and disbelief, like a threadbare cloth [neither whole nor torn].'

Then he said, 'Do you not find that inside yourself?'

He continued, 'Then a spot of either faith or disbelief appears on the heart – however Allah wills.'⁷

قال ابو عبد الله (ع): إن القلب ليكون الساعة من الليل والنهار ما فيه إيمان ولا كفر كالثوب الخلق. ثم قال: أما تجد ذلك من نفسك؟ قال: ثم تكون النكته من الله في القلب بما شاء من كفر وإيمان.

The heart is like a dome

The heart is like a dome with doors leading to it from every side; through these doors, the different moods enter. Or, it is like a target which arrows are aimed at from every direction. Or, it is like a standing mirror with many different types of images fleeting across it, reflecting image after image. Or, it can even be likened to a lake with many different streams flowing into it.

These effects, which are constantly renewed, enter the heart either externally through the five senses or internally through the faculties of imagination, desires, and anger, as well as the characteristics of a person's inner disposition. As soon as the senses experience something, its effect enters the heart. The same thing happens if the desires are aroused – for instance, by overeating or overstimulation – and the effects remain. The imagination flits from one thing to another, and moves the heart from one state to another along with it.

The heart, therefore, is constantly changing and being affected by these causes. Thoughts affect it the most; by

'thoughts', I mean all ideas and memories, either newly formed or remembered. Thoughts are what motivate the will [to act], for the intention, resolve, and will to act only come about after a thought has sprouted up in the mind. Thoughts are the beginning of action. They stir up the desire to act, which then inspires the intention and resolve to act – which, together, set the limbs in motion.

Thoughts that instigate the desire to act are divided into two groups: those that call towards evil (meaning, that will result in evil consequences), and those that call towards good (meaning, what will be beneficial in the Hereafter). There are two different types of thought: praiseworthy – which is called 'inspiration' (*ilham*), and blameworthy, which is called 'satanic insinuation' (*waswasah*). The source of thoughts which inspire goodness is called an angel, while the source of thoughts which incite evil is called a devil (*shaytan*). The grace that prepares the heart to accept inspiration from the angel is called 'succour' (*tawfiq*), and that which prepares it to accept devilish whisperings is called 'temptation' or 'desertion' (*khidhlan*). The angel is a creation of Allah which He created to overflow with goodness and to facilitate knowledge, the discovery of truth, and the promise of divine reward. However, the devil is a creature intent on evil, commanding indecency, and casting fear of poverty into the heart of someone intending to do good. The heart is in a constant tug of war between these two.

The Prophet (S) said,

'There are two stimuli in the heart. There is a stimulus from an angel, promising a good outcome and confirming the truth. Whoever finds that inside himself should know that this is from Allah and praise Him for it. And then there is a stimulus from the enemy, threatening an evil outcome, belying the truth, and opposing good. Whoever finds

that inside himself should seek refuge from Satan.'

Then he recited the verse: 'Satan frightens you about poverty and prompts you to [commit] indecent acts. But Allah promises you His forgiveness and grace, and Allah is all-bounteous, all-knowing.'
(2:268)⁸

في القلب لَتَان: لَمَّةٌ مِنَ الْمَلِكِ، إِيْعَادٌ بِالْخَيْرِ وَتَصْدِيقٌ بِالْحَقِّ، فَمَنْ وَجَدَ ذَلِكَ، فَلْيَعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ
فَلْيَحْمَدِ اللَّهَ، وَلَمَّةٌ مِنَ الْعَدُوِّ، إِيْعَادٌ بِالشَّرِّ، وَتَكْذِيبٌ بِالْحَقِّ، وَفِيهِ عَنِ الْخَيْرِ، فَمَنْ وَجَدَ ذَلِكَ
فَلْيَتَعَوَّذْ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ ثُمَّ تَلَا: ﴿الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُم بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُكُم مَّغْفِرَةً مِّنْهُ
وَفَضْلًا وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾.

He also said,

Man's heart rests between two fingers of the All-Merciful.⁹

قلب المؤمن بين إصبعين من أصابع الرحمن.

He directs it however He wills. The Prophet (S) was alluding to the fact that the angel and the devil have been given the power to make the heart turn faster or slower, to move the heart, and to change it. In turning the hearts, they are subservient to His power, just as your own fingers are subservient to you when you turn over objects.

In its natural state, the heart will accept both angelic inspirations and devilish insinuations equally. However, one of the two predominates when whims and desires are either obeyed or fought. Whenever worldly thoughts and their accompanying desires overcome the heart, Satan seizes the opportunity to whisper into the heart. But whenever it is devoted to the remembrance of Allah, Satan is squeezed out, and the angel draws near and provides its inspiration. The battle between the angelic and demonic forces rages continuously on the battlefield of the heart until the heart opens itself to one of them, which settles comfortably in it, and it considers the other

to be a trespasser. Allah says,

When those who are God-fearing are touched by a visitation of Satan, they remember [Allah] and, behold, they perceive. (7:201)

Satan's subtle trickery

Know that Satan can make his insinuations appear angelic, for one of Satan's shrewd tactics is disguising evil as good. For instance, he might tell a scholar who is on his way to preach, *Do you not see that these people are dying of ignorance and heedlessness and are at the brink of the Fire? Have you no mercy for these servants of Allah that you might save them from ruin through your advice and preaching? Especially since Allah has gifted you with an insightful heart, an eloquent tongue, and captivating speech? How can you deny these blessings and expose yourself to His displeasure by refraining from spreading knowledge and inviting Allah's creatures – exalted be He! – onto the straight path?* He repeats these thoughts, with their subtle trickery, until the scholar preoccupies himself with preaching to the masses.

Then, Satan incites him to dress well for the people, to put on airs when speaking, and to appear good. He says, *If you do not do this, your words will have no effect on their hearts, and they will not be guided to the truth.* He continues repeating these words and, in this praise, he plants vices such as showing off, seeking others' approval, desire for status, pride in his vast knowledge, and looking down on others with disdain.

Step by step, the poor man's preaching leads him to his own destruction. Although he thinks his intention is good, he only speaks to attain status and approval. As a result, he perishes – even while he still thinks he has a lofty

position with Allah. The Prophet (S) spoke about these people when he said,

Truly, Allah reinforces this religion through unethical people; truly, He reinforces it through corrupt men.¹⁰

إن الله ليؤيد هذا الدين بأقوام لا خلاق لهم، وإن الله ليؤيد هذا الدين بالرجل الفاجر.

Angelic inspiration and satanic whisperings

Some gnostics have said that angelic inspiration and satanic whisperings enter the soul in different ways and have different signs.

The first signs are knowledge and conviction. They are obtained from the soul's right side when it confronts caprice and desire, which are obtained from its left.

The second sign is looking at signs in the outer world as well as inside the self to derive order and laws from it to dispel imaginings and doubts. These in turn give rise to inner knowledge and wisdom in the faculty of reason, which is on the right side of the soul. In contrast, someone might look at the same signs to find fault, be heedless, and reject them; this would in turn give rise to doubts and satanic whispering in the faculties of imagination and illusion, which are on the soul's left side. To the intellect and the perfected souls, the decisive signs (*ayat muhkamat*) are on the same level as the holy angels, for they are the foundation of obvious knowledge. The obscure, metaphorical (*mutashabihat*) signs are on the same level as the devils and the base, deluded souls, for they are the foundation of the premises of sophistry.

The third sign is obedience to the Prophet – the chosen one – and the purified Imams vis-à-vis the infidels – the heretics who reject faith, deny Allah's attributes, and are

anthropomorphists. All who tread the path of guidance are at the level of the angels in inspiring good, and all who tread the path of error are like devils, misleading with their evil.

The fourth sign is acquiring knowledge and discernment in lofty subjects and about noble personalities – for instance, faith in Allah, His angels and prophets, the Last Day, the Resurrection, the Decisive Hour, the presenting of all creatures before Allah, and the presence of the angels, prophets, martyrs and righteous people. On the opposite side is the acquisition of knowledge and higher learning for the sake of deception, cunning, and sophistry, concentrated on worldly matters chained to the world of sensory perceptions.

The first group represent the angelic, spiritual forces and the hosts of the all-Compassionate who inhabit the heavenly realms. The second group represents the devils, repelled from Allah's door, forbidden entrance into the heavens, banished to darkness, prevented from ascending up from the lowly world, and veiled from all bliss in the Hereafter.

Are we accountable for our intentions?

Know that no one is taken to account for thinking about committing a wrongdoing because the thought does not enter the mind by choice. The same goes for an inclination or an arousal, because these too are involuntary. However, if, in his heart, someone believes that he should do this and resolves to do so, then it depends on whether this happened voluntarily or not, and there are various circumstances surrounding this. A person is accountable for what is voluntary, not what is involuntary.

A person is held accountable for the intent to act [wrongfully] unless he does not actually carry it out. If he abandons this idea out of fear of Allah and regrets his intent, it is recorded for him as a good deed, for the intention was a misdeed, but self-restraint and fighting the lower self are good deeds. Intending to commit a sin which is agreeable to one's base nature does not indicate that someone is completely negligent of Allah, for restraining and fighting natural temptations requires great strength. His effort in combating his base nature – which is an act for the sake of Allah – is stronger than his effort to follow Satan by giving in to his base nature. A good deed is thus written down for him because his effort at resisting took precedence – his intention to resist overpowered his intention to carry out that act.

If, however, the person is prevented from carrying out his intention because of some impediment, or abandons it for a reason other than fear of Allah, it is written down against him as a wrongdoing, for his heart chose to carry out that misdeed.

The evidence for this is as the Prophet (S) explained,

The angels said, 'O Lord, that servant of yours intends to commit a sin but has now realized [his error].'

[Allah] replied, 'Watch him. If he acts upon it, write it for him as it is. If he abandons it, write it for him as a good deed, for he has abandoned it for My sake.'¹¹

قالت الملائكة: ربّ ذاك عبدك يريد أن يعمل سيئة وهو أبصر فقال: أرقبوه فإن عملها فاكتبوه عليه بمثلها، فإن تركها فاكتبوه له حسنة، إنما تركها لأجلي.

It is narrated that, regarding the Qur'anic verse 'and whether you disclose what is in your hearts or hide it, Allah will bring you to account for it' (2:284), the

Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

This verse was revealed to the prophets and past communities, but they refused to accept it because of its heaviness. The Messenger of Allah (S) accepted it and revealed it in turn to his community, who accepted it. When Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, saw that they accepted it, even though they would not be able to bear it, He said, 'Since you accepted this verse despite its severity and gravity – and since I had revealed it to people in the past who had refused to accept it, but your community accepted it – it is only fitting for Me to lift it from them. And He said, 'Allah does not task any soul beyond its capacity' (2:286), so it is evident that whatever falls outside one's capacity, one is not taken to account for.¹²

إن هذه الآية عُرِضَتْ عَلَى الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالْأُمَمِ السَّابِقَةِ فَأَبَوْا أَنْ يَقْبَلُوهَا مِنْ ثِقَلِهَا، وَقَبِلَهَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) وَعَرَضَهَا عَلَى أُمَّتِهِ فَقَبِلُوهَا، فَلَمَّا رَأَى اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مِنْهُمْ الْقَبُولَ عَلَى أَثَمٍ لَا يَطِيقُونَهَا قَالَ: أَمَّا إِذَا قَبِلْتَ الْآيَةَ بِتَشْدِيدِهَا وَعَظَمِ مَا فِيهَا، وَقَدْ عَرَضْتُهَا عَلَى الْأُمَمِ فَأَبَوْا أَنْ يَقْبَلُوهَا، وَقَبِلْتُهَا أَمَّتْكَ فَقَدْ عَلِيَ أَنْ أَرْفَعَهَا عَنْ أُمَّتِكَ وَقَالَ: لَا يَكْلِفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وَسْعَهَا، فَظَهَرَ أَنَّ مَا لَا يَدْخُلُ تَحْتَ الْوَسْعِ لَا يُؤَاخَذُ بِهِ.

It is narrated that the Prophet (S) said,

My community has been exempted from being held accountable for nine things: mistakes, forgetfulness, what they do not know, what they cannot do, what they are compelled to do, what they are forced to do, evil omens, Satan's whispering for them to ponder on the creation, and jealousy – so long as it is not uttered or acted upon.¹³

وَضَعُ عَنْ أُمَّتِي تِسْعَ خِصَالِ الْخَطَا وَالنِّسْيَانِ وَمَا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ وَمَا لَا يَطِيقُونَ وَمَا اضْطُرُّوا إِلَيْهِ، وَمَا اسْتَكْرَهُوا عَلَيْهِ وَالطَّيْرَةَ وَالْوَسْوَةَ فِي التَّفَكُّرِ فِي الْخَلْقِ وَالْحَسَدَ مَا لَمْ يَظْهَرَ بِلِسَانٍ أَوْ يَدٍ.

It is narrated that Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Allah decreed for the children of Adam that whoever intends a good deed but does not perform it will have a good deed written down for him. Whoever intends a good deed and does perform it will have ten good deeds written down for him. Whoever intends an evil deed but does not perform it will not have it written down against him; but if

he commits it, it will be recorded as a single evil deed.¹⁴

إن الله تعالى جعل لأدم في ذريته من همّ بحسنة ولم يعملها كتبت له حسنة، ومن همّ بحسنة وعملها كتبت له عشرا، ومن همّ بسيئة ولم يعملها لم تكتب عليه ومن، عملها كتبت له سيئة.

Another narration says,

When a servant [of Allah] commits a sin, he is given respite from morning until night. So if he asks Allah for forgiveness, [the sin] will not be written down against him.¹⁵

إذا أذنب ذنبا أجل من غدوة إلى الليل فإن استغفر الله لم يكتب عليه.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) was asked whether Allah would punish a man who acts spontaneously at the point of losing his temper. He replied,

Allah is too kind to make himself inaccessible to His servants.¹⁶

الله أكرم من أن يستغلق على عبده.

He also said,

There is no believer who commits a sin but does not go back and redress it – even if he ignores it for a while. This is what Allah meant in the Qur'an when He said 'except for lapses' (53:32).¹⁷ It is considered a lapse when the person redresses his lapse by seeking forgiveness from Allah for it.¹⁸

ما من مؤمن إلا وله ذنب يهجره زماناً ثم يَلْمُ به، وذلك قوله تعالى ﴿إِلَّا اللَّمَمُ﴾ قال: واللمم الرجل يَلْمُ بالذنب فيستغفر الله منه.

It is narrated that Imam al-Kazim (A) said,

Allah supports the believer with a spirit that comes to him whenever he performs a good deed and is pious, and which leaves him whenever he sins or transgresses. When he is good, the spirit quivers with delight, and when he is bad, it withdraws to the stars. So keep the blessings of Allah upon you, O servants of Allah, by reforming yourselves. Your conviction will increase, and you will profit immeasurably and invaluablely. May Allah have mercy upon a person

who intends good and carries it out, or intends evil but is deterred from it. We help the spirit through obeying Allah and acting for His sake.¹⁹

إن الله أيد المؤمن بروح تحضره في كل وقت يحسن فيه ويتقي، ويغيب عنه في كل وقت يذنب فيه ويعتدي، فهي معه تهتّز سروراً عند إحسانه وتسيخ في الثرى عند إساءته، فتعاهدوا عباد الله نعمه بإصلاحكم أنفسكم، تزدادوا يقيناً وترجوا نفيساً ثميناً، رحم الله امرأة هم بخير فعله، أو هم بشر فارتدع عنه، ثم قال: نحن نؤيد الروح بالطاعة لله والعمل له.

Notes

- ¹ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 13.
- ² al-Fattal, *Rawdat al-Wa'izin*, p. 20.
- ³ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 12.
- ⁴ Ibid., vol. 3, p. 12.
- ⁵ 'Ala' al-Din 'Ali al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa al-Af'al* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risalah, 1989), vol. 1, p. 406.
- ⁶ al-Saduq, *Ma'ani al-Akhbar*, p. 395; al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 423.
- ⁷ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 420.
- ⁸ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 27.
- ⁹ Ibn Abi Jumhur al-Ahsa'i, *Awali al-La'ali*, vol. 1, p. 48; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 1, p. 94.
- ¹⁰ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 29.
- ¹¹ al-Naysaburi, Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr), vol. 1, p. 82.
- ¹² al-Tabarsi, *al-Ihtijaj*, vol. 1, p. 327.
- ¹³ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 463.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 428.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 437.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., vol. 8, p. 254, no. 360.
- ¹⁷ These are interpreted as lapses or almost sins in *al-Misbah*, and as minor sins in *al-Qamus*.
- ¹⁸ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 442.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p. 268.

SECOND TREATISE

Evil Characteristics and their Cure

In it are four books...

❖ Defining & Shaping Character ❖

Introduction

Know that 'character' can be defined as a fixed constitution within the soul, from which actions emanate and flow effortlessly without the need for contemplation or forethought. If beautiful and praiseworthy actions, logical and legally sound, emanate from this constitution, it is termed 'good character'. If it yields vile actions, it is termed 'evil character'.

It is a 'fixed' constitution because a single, uncharacteristic act of giving away wealth for some reason, for example, does not make someone's character generous until and unless that becomes a fixed disposition inside himself. Effortlessness and an absence of forethought are also prerequisites because someone who is obliged to give cannot be called generous, since that does not describe the act. Many people may have the characteristic of generosity even though they do not spend a penny due to lack or some other impediment. And many people may have the characteristic of miserliness even though they give for some reason or to show off.

A person with good character must possess the faculty of equity (*quwwat al-'adl*) between the three faculties of knowledge (*'ilm*), desire (*shahwah*), and anger (*ghadab*).

The faculty of knowledge is beautiful and proper when

it easily distinguishes between true and false statements, right and wrong beliefs, and beautiful and vile deeds. If it attains this, it bears the fruit of wisdom. Wisdom is the fountainhead of good moral traits, and 'whoever has been granted wisdom has been granted abundant good' (2:269).

The faculties of desire and anger are good when they are restricted – both in their stimulation and withdrawal – to the limits required by wisdom and religion. The faculty of equity regulates the faculties of desire and anger under the direction of the intellect and the divine law. The intellect, therefore, is like an advising mentor whose power is manifested when anger and desire obey it. The faculty of anger can be likened to a hunting dog who must be trained to charge and halt when commanded, not according to its whims. The faculty of desire can be likened to a horse which someone rides while hunting. Sometimes it is tame, and sometimes it is wild.

When these qualities reach equilibrium in a person, that person will possess absolute good character. When someone has some of these in balance but not others, he has good character with respect to those specific qualities.

Goodness and equilibrium in the faculty of anger is known as courage; in the faculty of desire, it is known as chastity. When the faculty of anger loses equilibrium and becomes excessive, it is called rashness; when it becomes deficient, it is called cowardice. When the faculty of desire becomes excessive, it is called greed; and when it becomes deficient, it is called indifference. The praiseworthy ideal is the middle path of equilibrium, and the two extremes are reproachable vices.

When equity itself is lost, it does not have two extremes of excess and deficiency on either side; it only

has an opposite, which is inequity.

Unqualified use of wisdom for wrongful ends is known as deception or artifice, while a lack of wisdom is called idiocy. Only the balanced way in between is called 'wisdom'.

The mothers and roots of all beautiful moral characteristics are four: wisdom, courage, chastity, and equity. No one other than the Messenger of Allah (A) has achieved complete equilibrium in these four qualities; this is why Allah said, praising him:

And indeed you possess a great character. (68:4)

People after him vary in how close to him or how far from him they are, and so we must follow him, for he said,

I have been sent to perfect the noble moral qualities.¹

أَلَمْ أَرْسَلْكُمْ لِيَكْمِلُوا مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ.

The Qur'an indicates these qualities when describing the faithful when Allah says:

The faithful are only those who have attained faith in Allah and His Messenger and then have never doubted, and who strive with their wealth and their persons in the way of Allah. It is they who are the truthful. (49:15)

Faith in Allah and His Messenger, without any doubt, is the strength of conviction, which is the fruit of the intellect and the peak of wisdom. Striving with one's wealth is generosity, and this goes back to regulating the faculty of desire. Striving with one's self is courage, and this goes back to controlling the faculty of anger through the intellect to keep it in equilibrium.

Allah described a certain community as 'severe against the infidels and merciful amongst themselves' (48:29). This

shows that both severity and mercy have a place, and that perfection lies neither in absolute severity nor in absolute mercy in every situation.

Can inner characteristics be changed?

Know that some people who are dominated by laziness find striving, discipline, and the hard work needed for purifying the self and refining the character quite cumbersome. Their own self does not let them do that because of its own shortcomings and faults. So they assume that neither characteristics nor natural dispositions can be changed, and they give the following two excuses.

First, they say that character is a person's inner form, just as the physical body is the outer form. Just as a person cannot alter his physical form, he cannot change his inner form.

Second, they say that good character can only be attained by eradicating anger, desire, love of this world, and other vices, and that this is impossible, and a waste of time, for it would require someone to cut off his attention from this world, and that would be impossible.

In response, we argue that if characteristics were impossible to change, then there would be no point in exhortations, advice, or punishment. There would be no point to what Allah has said in the Qur'an – 'by the soul and Him who fashioned it, and inspired it to [discern between] virtues and vice. One who purifies it is felicitous, and one who betrays it fails' (91:7-10) or the Prophet's saying,

Beautify your conduct.² حسّنوا أخلاقكم.

How could this be impossible for humans when even the characters of animals can change? A wild gazelle can be tamed; a rapacious dog can be trained to restrain itself in a hunt; and an untamed horse can be broken in and controlled – all of this is a change in character.

According to Kashif al-Ghita', created beings are divided into two categories: those that do not fall under human jurisdiction in their nature and particulars, such as the sky, the stars, the parts of the body, and basically all that has come into existence already perfect and complete. And then there are those things whose existence is incomplete, and that have the underlying capacity for perfection once the conditions for it are fulfilled. These conditions can be linked to humans. For example, a date pit is neither an apple nor a palm tree, but it has been created with the possibility and capability of becoming a palm tree, if it is nurtured. It will never become an apple, even with nurture. So if a date pit can be influenced to accept certain states but not others, we could never fully eradicate or uproot anger and desire until no trace of them remains. However, we could tame them and make them subservient through training, striving, and discipline; and, indeed, we have been commanded to do so. This is the means to our salvation and to reaching Allah; what is required of us is this, not total eradication.

How could it be otherwise when the faculty of desire has been created to benefit us, and it is necessary for our survival? If the desire for food were uprooted, man would perish. If sexual desire were eradicated, procreation would cease. If anger were removed, man would never be able to defend himself and would be destroyed.

To the extent that the root of desire remains, love of

wealth is bound to remain; this in turn will lead to the desire for wealth and hoarding. What is required, therefore, is not to eradicate it completely, but to keep it in balance – the moderate state between the two extremes of excess and deficiency.

Similarly, what is required regarding anger is a positive sense of protectiveness. One should neither be rash nor cowardly, but be strong in one's self, and that strength should be subservient to the intellect. If it were wrong to have any anger, then it would have been prohibited to fight the disbelievers. How can the goal be to completely eradicate desire and anger, when our own prophets were prone to anger, and the highest of the prophets [Prophet Muhammad] (S) said,

'I am only a man who gets angry like others do'?³

إلما أنا بشر أغضب كما يغضب البشر.

When people used to say hateful things to him, he would get angry, and his cheeks would turn red, but he would never speak anything but the truth, and he never let his anger take him outside the bounds of what was right. Allah says, 'and those who suppress their anger' (3:134) – not 'those who have no anger'.

Sometimes, desire may overcome a person to the extent that his intellect is not strong enough to prevent him from enjoying wrongdoing. With training, it will come back into balance, and experience and real life examples prove that this is possible without a doubt.

Refining character traits

The equilibrium between the two faculties may either be originally inherent, as in the case of someone born perfect

in intellect and character, and whose intellect already governs his desire, such as the prophets and the Imams. Or it may be acquired through striving and training, through imposing on the soul the actions necessary for cultivating noble character.

For instance, if someone wishes to have the quality of magnanimity, he should do what a generous person would do, such as give charity. He must remain diligent and strive against his self until it becomes natural, effortless, and easy for him, and his soul becomes magnanimous. Similarly, a proud person who wants to possess the quality of humbleness must devote himself to performing humble acts for a long time, striving with his soul throughout, and forcing himself to persevere until it becomes a natural disposition within him.

All noble characteristics that are divinely commended can be acquired through this method, and it reaches its height when the resulting actions become pleasurable. A magnanimous person, for instance, enjoys giving, contrary to someone who gives reluctantly. Similarly, a humble person enjoys being humble. These religious morals will never be ingrained in the soul unless a person accustoms himself to inculcating all good habits and abandoning all bad habits.

As long as a person does not devote himself entirely to this – yearning to perform beautiful actions and taking pleasure in them, like the Prophet's saying

جعلت قُرَّةَ عَيْني في الصلاة.⁴ Prayer is the delight of my eye.

– and despising evil acts and being pained by them – and as long as he finds acts of worship and refraining from misdeeds burdensome and odious, he is at great loss

and will never attain true happiness.

True, applying one's self to such efforts is good in and of itself. However, it must be accompanied by letting go of the negative quality and not purposely persisting in it. This is why Allah says, 'and it is indeed hard except for the humble' (2:45). The Prophet (S) said,

Worship Allah willingly; and if you cannot, there is great good in being patient with what you do not like.⁵

أعبد الله في الرضا، فإن لم تستطع، ففي الصبر على ما تكره خير كثير.

Additionally, inconsistency will not allow someone to secure the prosperity promised for noble character, where acts of obedience are only sometimes performed with pleasure, and sins are only sometimes despised. Rather, this must become a permanent state throughout life. The longer one's life, the firmer and more complete the virtue. When the Prophet (S) was once asked about happiness, he replied that it was

Spending one's entire life in obedience to Allah.⁶

طول العمر في طاعة الله.

This is why the prophets and saints despised death, for this world is the planting ground for the Hereafter. The more abundant one's worship is due to a lengthy lifespan, the greater the reward is, the purer and cleaner the soul is, and the stronger and deeper-rooted one's noble characteristics are. The whole point of acts of worship is for them to affect the heart, and in fact, these have the greatest and most significant effect when they are performed with diligence. The goal of these noble moral virtues is to eradicate love of this world from the heart so that the love of Allah may become firmly ingrained

therein until nothing is more beloved to the person than Allah and meeting Him. Consequently, every characteristic that appears in the heart has effects which permeate throughout the limbs which move in harmony with it. And every action performed by the limbs, as we know, affects the heart.

A person who seeks to purify himself will not attain this goal through a single day's worship, nor will he be barred from it by a single day's disobedience. Rather, one idle day leads to another, and another, until, little by little, the soul becomes accustomed to laziness and abandons its quest. Minor sins accumulate on top of each other; and by the end of one's life, the person has lost not only the basis of his eternal happiness but also the basis of his faith. Therefore, a person must always underrate his acts of worship, but never his sins, no matter how small. Although it takes a large number of sins to leave a significant effect on the heart, this large number is made of single sins, and each one of them has an effect.

Noble character traits may also be acquired by watching people perform noble acts and keeping company with them, as they are friends of goodness. Similarly, evil character traits may also be acquired through watching people commit evil acts and by keeping company with them, for they are friends of evil. Human nature is such that it picks up good and bad.

When virtue is manifested in three areas in a person – in nature, habit, and knowledge – that person has attained the peak of virtue. Then, there is the one who has an evil character, and keeps evil companions, who teach him and facilitate for him the means to evil, until he is conditioned to being as far away from Allah as possible. Between

these two levels is the one whose inclinations vary; at every level, his closeness to or distance from Allah is determined by his virtues and his states at one time.

So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it. (99:7-8)

Allah did not wrong them, but they used to wrong themselves. (16:33)

Insight into personal faults

Know that when Allah wishes good for His servant, He makes him notice his own faults. So a person who has perfected his insight will not have his faults hidden from him, and whoever recognises his faults can treat them. The majority of people, however, are ignorant of their own faults, and will notice a speck in their brother's eye but not the tree stump in their own. Whoever wants to find his faults should seek a true, honest, perceptive, and pious friend and appoint him to monitor his inner self and observe his states and actions, and to draw his attention to his inner and outer defects. Or, a person can learn about his faults from the tongue of his enemies, for a hostile eye reveals defects, as is said in the verse:

A contented eye is blind to every fault,
But a wrathful eye reveals all flaws.

A person may benefit much more from a despised enemy who lists his faults to him than from a flattering friend who praises him, applauds him, and hides his faults from him. Although human nature is such that people deny their enemies' words and write them off to jealousy, an insightful person will always seek to benefit from his enemies' words, for he will expect his defects to circulate among their tongues.

Another approach is for a person to mingle with other people. Whenever he sees something reproachable in them, he should command his self to avoid it. And whenever he seems something commendable, he should command his self to adopt it, for 'the believer is the mirror of the believer', in that he recognises his own faults reflected in the faults of others.

He must also remember that people's natures are all the same when it comes to following desires, and that every attribute in one person will also be found in his friend, to one extent or another. In this way, he will have inspected his soul and purified it of all he finds blameworthy in others; this is effective discipline indeed. If all people were to only desist from what they abhor in others, they would not need anyone to discipline them. Prophet Jesus (A) was once asked,

'Who taught you?'

He replied, 'No one taught me. I perceived the repulsiveness of ignorance and kept away from it.'⁷

قيل لعيسى (ع): من أذكك؟ فقال: ما أدبني أحد، رأيت جهل الجاهل فجانبته.

Notes

¹ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 48 and vol. 2, p. 143; al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, no. 5217.

² al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 54.

³ Ibid., p. 55.

⁴ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 91.

⁵ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 91; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 57.

⁶ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 92; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 57.

⁷ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 96.

❖ Three Sources of Ill Traits ❖

Introduction

Three sources of ill character traits are the stomach, the private parts, and the tongue. Know that characteristics take root in the soul through repeated actions. Actions originate in the heart and are executed by body parts. Each part of the body is capable of producing good actions, which give rise to good character, as well as foul actions, which bring about bad character. Therefore, a person must take care to use his heart and limbs for good purposes and to prevent them from wrongdoing. The greatest destroyers of the children of Adam are the desire for food, the sexual urge, and the tongue.

It is narrated that the Prophet (S) said,

A person who protects himself from his dome, his pendant, and his stork is indeed protected.¹

من وقى شر قبعه وذبدبه ولقلقه فقد وقى.

– the dome being the belly, the pendant being the genitals, and the stork being the tongue's prattle.

It was the stomach's desire that led Adam and Eve to be expelled from the eternal abode to the abode of humiliation and poverty since they were forbidden to eat from that tree, but their desire overpowered them until they ate from it. As a result, their nakedness became apparent to them.

THREE SOURCES OF ILL TRAITS

In fact, the stomach is the fountainhead of the other desires and the hotbed for numerous ailments and afflictions since it is followed by sexual desire and a lust for sexual pleasures. Lust and the appetite for food are then followed by avid greed for wealth and position since both are means to edible and sexual pleasures. Acquiring wealth and status is further followed by various frivolities, competitions, and rivalries. From this are born vices such as arrogance, showing off, vying, and haughtiness. These, in turn, engender malice, animosity, and resentment, which lead the one who harbours them to plunge into aggression and wrong and indecent acts.

This is the result of ignoring the stomach and satiating it without check. If that same person overcame his base self through hunger and thoroughly restricted Satan's access to it, it would willingly yield to Allah's obedience and would neither run wild nor transgress. It would not allow itself to be driven to complete submersion in this worldly life, to sacrifice the Hereafter for the present, nor would it engage in such ferocious struggles for supremacy in this world.

The Prophet (S) said,

The son of Adam fills no container worse than his stomach. A few morsels should suffice to keep his back straight. If he must fill it, let him keep a third for food, a third for drink, and a third for his breath.²

ما ملأ ابن آدم وعاءَ شراً من بطنه، حسب ابن آدم لقيمات يقمن صلبه وإن كان هو فاعلاً لا محالة فنلت لطعامه وثلت لشرايه وثلت لنفسه.



Do not kill your hearts with excess food and drink, for the heart is like a seedling which will die if it is overwatered.³

لا تميتوا القلوب بكثرة الطعام والشراب، فإن القلب كالزروع يموت إذا كثرت عليه الماء.



The ones with the most favoured position with Allah from among you all are those who hunger and meditate the longest. And the most abhorred by Allah, the Exalted, from among you are those who sleep, eat, and drink excessively.⁴

أفضلكم منزلة عند الله أطولكم جوعاً وتفكيراً، وأبغضكم إلى الله تعالى كل نؤوم أكل شروب.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

The stomach exceeds the limits when it comes to food. The closest that a servant [of Allah] can get to Allah is when his stomach is light, and the servant is most loathsome to Allah when his stomach is full.⁵

إن البطن ليطغى من أكلته، وأقرب ما يكون العبد إلى الله إذا خف بطنه، وأبغض ما يكون العبد إلى الله إذا امتلأ بطنه.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says,

Nothing is more harmful to the heart of a believer than excess food. It leaves him with two traits: hard-heartedness and burning lust. In hunger lies the source of longevity for the believer, nourishment for the soul, food for the heart, and the health of the body.⁶

ما من شيء أضرب لقلب المؤمن من كثرة الأكل، وهي مورثة شيئين: قسوة القلب وهيجان الشهوة، والجوع إدام للمؤمن، وغذاء للروح وطعام للقلب وصحة للبدن.

Luqman said to his son,

O my son! When the stomach is full, the intellect sleeps, wisdom is muted, and the limbs of the body desist from worship.⁷

يا بُنَيَّ إذا امتلأت المعدة، نامت الفكرة، وخرست الحكمة، وقعدت الأعضاء عن العبادة.

To conclude, there are many benefits of hunger, namely the purification of the heart, its softness and delight in His obedience, a melancholy which prevents it from committing sins and being negligent; remembrance of the hunger of the Day of Judgment; breaking the sexual

desire which is governed by satiety; and repulsion of sleep which makes one lethargic, wastes away one's life, and makes one miss the night vigil and the night prayers. Hunger facilitates diligence to worship because of the lightness of the body that ensues, and it frees one from the concerns of obtaining food, preparing it, eating it, and treating the ailments that arise as a result of it.

It is narrated that 'the belly is the abode of ailment, while diet is the root of every cure.'⁸

المعدة بيت الداء والحمية رأس كل دواء.

Equilibrium in the desires

You now know that the ultimate goal of all moral states and characteristics is the middle course. The aforementioned virtues of hunger may have suggested that extremeness in this case is a requirement – far from it, however! It is actually one of the secret tactics of the wisdom of the shariah that whenever man's base nature inclines towards one extreme, being to its detriment, the shariah prescribes the other extreme in forbidding it. So, to the ignorant, it may seem as if what is required is to do the extreme opposite of what one's base nature demands, as far as possible. The man of knowledge, however, realizes that the aim is to achieve balance therein; for as the natural disposition seeks absolute satiety, then the shariah must necessarily prescribe absolute hunger, so that in the midst of the mutual resistance between the urges of man's nature and the prohibitions of the divine law, equilibrium is attained. When the Prophet (S) elaborated the merits of standing for prayer in the night and fasting in the day, then came to know that someone

was fasting all the time, and spending entire nights in prayer, he forbade him from doing this.

Having understood this, know also that in addition to having a balanced disposition, the best course of action is to eat in such a way that one neither feels heaviness in the stomach nor painful pangs of hunger. Rather he must forget his belly so that it holds no significance for him whatsoever. Since the aim of eating is the preservation of life and to gain energy for acts of worship, heavy meals only serve to hinder one from worship, and hunger pangs do the same by preoccupying the heart. The aim, therefore, is to eat in a balanced way, such that food has no preoccupation for him whatsoever, enabling him to be like the angels, for they are too holy for both the heaviness of food and the pain of hunger. Allah's words in the Qur'an allude to this: 'Eat and drink, but do not waste' (7:31). The yardstick here is to eat only when one is hungry, and to restrain one's hand while still having an appetite.

Sexual desire

As for sexual desire, it has a hold on man for the survival of the human race and the continuation of existence, and that man, through his experience of its pleasure, may draw an analogy by which he may come to understand the pleasures of the Hereafter. For if the pleasure of the sexual act were to last, it would be the greatest physical pleasure, just as the pain of a burn is the body's greatest physical pain. Deterrence and encouragement serve to drive people towards their salvation, and can only be effective by means of palpable pain and tangible pleasure. These are the benefits [of sexual desire]. Its bane,

however, is that it can destroy both one's religion as well as one's worldly life if it is not restrained, subjugated, and restored to the bounds of equilibrium, for it too has two extremes of excess and deficiency.

An excess of it, therefore, overpowers the intellect such that a man's ambition is consumed with sexual relations with women and girls, and he fails to tread the path to the Hereafter. Or he may transgress the bounds of religion so that he can plunge headlong into indecencies. For someone whose delusion gets the better of his reason, this desire can even take him as far as bestial infatuation, which comes about when one is completely controlled by one's desire. Imagination, then, subjugates the intellect to serve only the desire, even though the intellect has been created to be obeyed, and not to be a treacherous servant of the desire. This is a sickness of an idle heart, which has no other preoccupation. Precaution from the very beginning is of paramount importance, by restraining one's gaze and one's thoughts; otherwise it is very difficult to repel once it has become pervasive.

Deficiency in sexual desire is manifested either through unwarranted celibacy or through weakness or impotence. This too is reproached, for it is a praiseworthy characteristic only when it is moderate and subservient to the intellect and to the divine law, in its fulfilment and restraint. Whenever it becomes excessive, it should be disciplined with hunger and marriage. The Prophet (S) said,

O young men! It is incumbent upon you to marry; and whoever cannot do so must fast, for fasting is a form of castration for him.⁹

معاشر الشباب عليكم بالباءة فمن لم يستطع فعليه بالصوم فإن الصوم له وجاء.

The most powerful desire

Know that this desire is the most powerful of all desires to have a hold on man, and the most rebellious against the intellect when it is aroused. Its consequences are vile and shameful, and its indulgence is to be feared. The majority of people refrain from indulging their sexual desire either because of incapacity, fear, shame, or to protect their reputations. None of these reasons, however, earns any divine reward, for it is simply a case of one desire of the soul being chosen over another. It is certainly a protection for him that he cannot fulfil his desire, and there is definitely benefit in all such impediments, for they prevent sin. A man who does not commit fornication will not be liable for its sin, whatever his reason for abstaining may have been. But true merit and reward are only due when one refrains from it out of fear of Allah even though one is able to carry it out, without any impediments to prevent him from doing so, and the means are facilitated for him. This is especially the case when his desire is genuine, and this is the level of the Truthful ones.

It is for this reason that the Prophet (S) said,

Whoever feels ardent passion, then suppresses it in order to remain chaste, and dies in the process, has died the death of a martyr.¹⁰

من عشق فعفَّ وكنم فمات فهو شهيد.

He also said, 'Allah will shade seven types of people on the Day when there will be no shade but His.' He enumerated among the latter 'a man seduced by a woman of beauty and good repute, but who says, "Indeed I fear Allah, the Lord of the Worlds".'¹¹

سبعة يظلهم الله يوم لا ظل إلا ظله، وعدَّ منهم رجلاً دعت امرأة ذات حسب وجمال إلى نفسها فقال: إني أخاف الله رب العالمين.

THREE SOURCES OF ILL TRAITS

The story of Prophet Joseph (A) and his rejection of Zulaykha in spite of his ability to yield to her and in spite of her desire for him is well-known, and Allah lauded him for it in His Book. He is the leader of all such people who have managed, through divine succour, to fight Satan with regard to this powerful desire.

Allah says:

Tell the faithful men to cast down their looks and to guard their private parts. (24:30)

The Prophet (S) said,

The gaze is a poisoned arrow of Satan's. Whoever averts it for fear of Allah, Allah grants him a faith, the sweetness of which he will find in his heart.¹²

النظرة سهم مسموم من سهام إبليس، فمن تركها خوفاً من الله، أعطاه الله إيماناً يجد حلاوته في قلبه.



Beware of the temptation of this world and the temptation of women, for the very first temptation to try the children of Israel (*bani isra'il*) was the temptation of women.¹³

إتقوا فتنة الدنيا وفتنة النساء فإن أول فتنة بني إسرائيل كانت من النساء.

Speech

The tongue is one of Allah's great blessings and one of the amazing wonders of His making. It is small in size, and yet can be of great significance and obedience, for it is only by means of the testimony of the tongue that belief and disbelief can be expressed, being the ultimate symbols of obedience and rebellion. Every single being, extant or not, Creator or created, imagined or known, presumed or fantastical, can be dealt with by the tongue and discussed, either positively or negatively; for everything that

knowledge encompasses can be expressed by the tongue, either truthfully or wrongfully. And there is nothing that knowledge cannot extend to. This is an exclusive characteristic that is not to be found in other parts of the body. The eye cannot perceive anything other than colours and shapes, and the ear does not grasp anything but sounds, and the hand can only handle physical matter, and similarly for the rest of the bodily organs.

The tongue, however, is a vast arena with no bounds. Its scope is infinite and unlimited. It has vast scope in goodness as well as wide pathways into evil. So when someone lets his sweet tongue loose and neglects it, giving it free rein, the devil uses it for his own ends in every situation, and drives it to the brink of a collapsing precipice, until he pushes it into perdition. People will be thrown into Hell nose-down just as a result of the evil that their tongues yielded, as is related in a Prophetic tradition.

There is no escaping the evil of the tongue unless it is tied with the rope of the divine Lawgiver, where it is only let loose in matters of benefit to the world and the Hereafter, and restrained from all situations whose danger poses a threat to the worldly life and the afterlife. The knowledge of situations where the tongue's free expression is commended and where it is reproached is quite abstruse, and practising in accordance with this knowledge is cumbersome and difficult. Indeed the most rebellious of all man's body parts is his tongue, for neither does it get exhausted in its movements nor does it require any effort in its indulgence. People are careless when it comes to being wary of its evils and dangers, and being on guard against its traps and snares; it is Satan's greatest

tool to mislead humankind.

This is why the Prophet (S) said,

He who is silent succeeds.¹⁴ مَنْ صَمَّتْ نَجَا.



Silence is wisdom, but few are those who practise it.¹⁵

الصمت حكم وقليل فاعله.



Guard your tongue for it is an alms that you owe to yourself – and the servant [of Allah] can never know true belief until he guards his tongue.¹⁶

قال رسول الله (ص): أمسك لسانك فإنها صدقة تصدق بها على نفسك، ثم قال: ولا يعرف عبد حقيقة الإيمان حتى يحرس لسانه.



Whoever sees the position of his speech compared to [that of] his actions will speak less except regarding what concerns him.¹⁷

من رأى موضع كلامه من عمله قل كلامه إلا فيما يعنيه.

The Commander of the Faithful was once passing by a man who was talking meddlesomely, so he stopped and said,

You dictate to your two angels the book inscribed for your Lord, so speak about issues that concern you and abandon whatever does not concern you.¹⁸

يا هذا فإنك تُملّي على حافظيك كتاباً إلى ربك، فتكلم بما يعينك ودع ما لا يعينك.

Imam al-Sajjad (A) said,

Man's tongue turns to the rest of his limbs every morning, and says to them, 'How are you all this morning?' They reply, 'All the better were you to leave us to ourselves.' They continue beseeching, 'Allah,

Allah, our mouth!' and tell it, 'You are the cause of our reward or punishment.'¹⁹

إن لسان ابن آدم يُشرف على جميع جوارحه كل صباح فيقول: كيف أصبحتم؟ فيقولون: بخير إن تركتنا، ويقولون: الله الله فينا ويناشدونه ويقولون: إنما نثاب ونعاقب بك.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said, 'Our followers (*shi'ah*) are the mute.'²⁰

إن شيعتنا الخرس.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Indeed sleep is a source of comfort for the body, speech is a source of comfort for the spirit, and silence is a source of comfort for the intellect.²¹

إن النوم راحة للبدن، والنطق راحة للروح، والسكوت راحة للعقل.



Among the wise sayings passed on from [Prophet] David is, 'A man of reason must be aware of his own era, occupied in improving his condition, and mindful of his tongue.'²²

على العاقل أن يكون عارفاً بزمانه، مقبلاً على شأنه حافظاً للسانه.

He related that Luqman once said to his son,

O my son! If speech is supposed to be silver, then indeed silence is golden.²³

يا بُني إن كنت زعمت أن الكلام من فضة فإن السكوت من ذهب.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says,

Speech manifests the purity, pollution, knowledge, and ignorance that man contains in his heart.²⁴

الكلام إظهار ما في قلب المرء من الصفاء والكدر والعلم والجهل.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

Man is hidden behind his tongue.²⁵ المرء مخبوء تحت لسانه.

So evaluate your speech and expose it before your intellect and knowledge. If it is for Allah, then speak. If not, then remaining silent is better. There is no easier form of worship made incumbent upon the parts of the body, which affords him a favourable position and great esteem with Allah than speaking for His pleasure and for His sake, by spreading His Signs and blessings among His servants. Do you not see that Allah, Mighty and Exalted, chose nothing more distinguished than speech as a means to communicate between Himself and His messengers, to reveal the meanings of the hidden secrets of His Knowledge and the treasures of His revelation? And similarly, between the messengers and their communities. We can ascertain from this, then, that this is the best means of communication and the finest form of worship. At the same time, there is no sin more burdensome for a servant [of Allah] to bear, or quicker to be punished by Allah, or more blameworthy and venomous among people than speech.

Imam al-Sajjad (A) was once asked which was better, speaking or silence. He replied,

‘Each of these two has its own harm; but when they are both safe from harm, speaking is better than keeping quiet.’

They asked him, ‘How is this so, O son of the Prophet (S)?’

He replied, ‘Because Allah, Mighty and Exalted, did not send the prophets and their successors to remain quiet; rather He sent them with speech. Heaven is not earned through silence, nor is protection from Hell sought through silence, nor Allah’s wrath averted through silence. All of these are only possible through speech. And nor would one be able to describe the merits of speech through silence.’²⁶

سُئِلَ السَّجَّادُ (ع) عَنِ الْكَلَامِ وَالسَّكُوتِ أَيُّهُمَا أَفْضَلُ؟ فَقَالَ: لِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمَا آفَاتٌ، فَإِذَا سَلِمَا مِنَ الْآفَاتِ، فَالْكَلَامُ أَفْضَلُ مِنَ السَّكُوتِ.

قيل: وكيف ذلك يا بن رسول الله؟

قال: لأن الله عز وجل ما بعث الأنبياء والأوصياء بالسكوت، إنما بعثهم بالكلام، ولا أستحيق الجنة بالسكوت، ولا يجب سخط الله بالسكوت، ولا استوجب ولاية الله بالسكوت، ولا ثويقت النار بالسكوت، ولا يجب سخط الله بالسكوت إنما ذلك كله بالكلام ما كنت لأعدل القمر بالشمس. إنك تصف فضل السكوت بالكلام، ولست تصف فضل الكلام بالسكوت.

Know that the evils of the tongue are numerous. They include wrongful speech, lying, backbiting, breaking a promise, slander, showing off, hypocrisy, rudeness, contention, self-praise, quarrelling, vain talk, intrusiveness, distortion, exaggeration, misrepresentation, hurting others, defamation, divulging secrets, mockery, belittling, and other such vices. These evils are quick for the tongue to perpetrate quite effortlessly, and are cherished by the heart. The incentives for these sins come from one's inherent disposition as well as from the devil. One who indulges therein rarely manages to restrain his tongue, so he lets it loose when he is not supposed to, and holds it when he should not. This is a great enigma – that indulging the tongue leads to danger, while in silence there is safety.

This is why there is great virtue in silence and its fruits, such as the curbing of anxiety, a constant state of sobriety, space to think, to remember Allah and to worship, immunity from the effects of worldly talk as well as having to account for it in the Hereafter. Allah says in the Qur'an:

No sooner does he utter a word than there is a ready observer beside him. (50:18)

There is no good in much of their secret talks, excepting him who enjoins charity or what is right or reconciliation between people. (4:114)

The Prophet (S) said,

Glad tidings be to the one who holds back the excess in his speech, but gives away the excess in his wealth.²⁷

طوبى لِمَنْ أَمْسَكَ الْفَضْلَ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَأَنْفَقَ الْفَضْلَ مِنْ مَالِهِ.

Lying and backbiting

This chapter deals specifically with the lying and backbiting that are inexcusable, for there are instances where they are allowed. Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Every lie will be held to account against its perpetrator, except for three: a man who lied as part of his war stratagem, a man who reconciled two people by relaying to one something different to what the other had said for the sake of reconciliation between them, and a man who promised his family something and cannot fulfil it for them.²⁸

كل كذب مسئول عنه صاحبه إلا في ثلاثة، رجل كاند في حربه فهو موضوع عنه، ورجل أصلح بين اثنين يلقى هذا بغير ما يلقى به هذا، يريد بذلك الإصلاح بينهما، ورجل وعد أهله شيئاً وهو لا يريد أن يتم لهم.

A similar tradition is narrated on the authority of the Prophet (S), as well as the narration that 'You can avoid lying by speaking indirectly,'²⁹ meaning that one can avoid saying the full situation (*tawriyah*) if compelled to do so [for instance, when someone is in danger].

إن في المعارض المندوحة عن الكذب.

The Prophet (S) said,

It is not backbiting when [speaking about] someone who has thrown off the mantle of shame from himself.³⁰

من ألقى جلباب الحياء عن وجهه فلا غيبة له.



It is not backbiting when [speaking about] a publicly immoral person.³¹

ليس لفاسق غيبة.



The plaintiff's narration [before a judge] about another's oppression or crime against him is allowed.³²

ليّ الواجد محلّ عرضه وعقوبته.



To each one is his right to speak.³³

لصاحب الحق مقال.

It is in fact obligatory to expose those who promote unlawful innovation (*bid'ah*) and baseless doubt so that people may be wary of them, for the Prophet (S) said,

Do you hesitate from disclosing the faults of a sinner such that people do not even know him? Talk about what he has done so that people may be on their guard against him.³⁴

أترعون عن ذكر الفاجر حتى لا يعرفه الناس، إذكروه بما فيه يحذره الناس.

The meaning of backbiting is the disclosure of anything that must be concealed. It is narrated that the Prophet (S) asked his companions,

'Do you know what backbiting is?'

They replied, 'Allah and his Messenger know better'.

He continued, 'It is to mention something about your fellow brother that he would not like.'

He was asked, 'What if the thing I mention about my brother is actually true?'

He replied, 'If what you mention about him is true then you have backbitten him,³⁵ and if what you have said is not true, you have slandered him.'

قال: هل تدرون ما الغيبة؟ قالوا: الله ورسوله أعلم، قال: ذكرك أخاك بما يكره، قيل: أ رأيت إن كان في أخي ما أقول؟ قال: إن كان فيه ما تقول فقد اغتبته، فإن لم يكن فيه قد بهته.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says,

Backbiting is to mention something about a person which is not considered a fault by Allah, or to criticize him for something that the people of knowledge would praise. As for discussing someone who is not present with regard to something which Allah censures, when that person is actually guilty of it, then this is not considered backbiting, even if he would dislike it were he to hear it. You are blameless regarding him and are considered as distinguishing right from wrong, as clarified by Allah and His Messenger, on condition that the speaker's intention in doing so was solely to clarify what is right and what is wrong in Allah's religion. If, however, he means to put down the person whom he is talking about, and not the above intention, then he is taken to task for his corrupt intention, even if he is correct in what he says.³⁶

صفة الغيبة أن تذكر أحداً بما ليس هو عند الله، ويدم ما يحمده أهل العلم فيه. وأما الخوض في ذكر غائب بما هو عند الله مذموم وصاحبه فيه ملوم، فليس بغيبة، وإن كره صاحبه إذا سمع به وكنت أنت معافاً عنه وخالياً منه. وتكون مبيناً للحق من الباطل ببيان الله ورسوله، ولكن على شرط ألا يكون للقاتل بذلك مراد غير بيان الحق والباطل في دين الله، وأما إذا أراد به نقص المذكور بغير ذلك المعنى، فهو مأخوذ بفساد مراده وإن كان صواباً.

The exception to the above tradition must be noted, however, in the case of someone who sins but either does not know of its evil, or he himself seeks to conceal it, disliking for it to be made public. This is mentioned in another tradition from the Prophet (S), where he said,

It [backbiting] is that you talk about your brother with respect to something that he is not observing in his faith, and you spread something that Allah himself had kept concealed about him and may have chosen not to punish him for.³⁷

هو أن تقول لأخيك في دينه ما لم يفعل، وثبتت عليه أمراً قد ستره الله عليه لم يُقَم عليه فيه حد.

Imam al-Kazim (A) said,

Whoever talks about a man behind his back, mentioning what is true about him and what people already know, has not backbitten him. However, one who talks about someone behind his back about something that is true but that people do not know about has backbitten him.³⁸

من ذكر رجلاً من خلفه بما هو فيه مما عرفه الناس لم يغبه، ومن ذكره من خلفه بما هو فيه مما لا يعرفه الناس اغتابه، ومن ذكره بما ليس فيه فقد بته.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Backbiting is to mention something about your brother that Allah has concealed. [Mentioning] obvious traits of his such as rage and haste, however, are not considered as such.³⁹

الغيبة أن تقول في أخيك ما ستره الله عليه، وأما الأمر الظاهر فيه مثل الحدة والعجلة فلا.

Some of our scholars have restricted the prohibition of backbiting to the backbiting of fellow believers in the truth, for the proofs of our divine law do not apply to those who are astray. So the ruling here applies exclusively to believers and to one's brothers in faith, and does not include those who do not believe in the truth. Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

The underlying cause of backbiting goes back to ten things: venting anger, aiding a certain group, believing a report without investigating it, accusations, jealousy, mockery, suspicion, astonishment, intolerance of someone, and trying to make yourself look good.⁴⁰

إن أصل الغيبة يتنوع بعشرة أنواع: شفاء غيظ، ومساعدة قوم، وهمة وتصديق خبر بلا كشفه، وسوء ظن وحسد وسخرية وتعجب وتبرم وتزين.



If you have backbitten someone and he hears about it, then go and seek his pardon. And if it has not reached him, then seek forgiveness for him.⁴¹

وإن اغتبت فبلغ المغتاب فاستحل منه، وإن لم تبلغه فاستغفر له.

The other evils of the tongue need not be mentioned in detail.

Notes

¹ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 105; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 104; al-Daylami, *Irshad al-Qulub*, p. 103.

² Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 46; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 77.

³ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 46; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 77.

⁴ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 77.

⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 6, p. 269.

⁶ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 77.

⁷ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 102.

⁸ al-Tabarsi al-Shaykh Fadl ibn al-Hasan, *Makarim al-Akhlaq* (Qum: Manshurat al-Sharif al-Radi, 1972), p. 362. Note that this commonly cited narration is actually thought to have been attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (S) in error. See 'Abd al-Hadi al-Fadli, *Introduction to Hadith*, 2nd edition (London: ICAS Press, 2011), pp. 176-177.

⁹ *al-'Awali*, vol. 1, p. 257, no. 27; *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 7, p. 3; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 96.

¹⁰ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 100.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 97.

¹³ Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁴ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 104; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 103; al-Daylami, *Irshad al-Qulub*, p. 103.

¹⁵ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 104; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 103.

¹⁶ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 114.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 116.

¹⁸ al-Saduq, *Man La Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, vol. 4, p. 396.

¹⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 115; al-Saduq, al-Shaykh (Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Babawayh al-Qummi), *al-Khisal* (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islami al-Tabi'ah li Jama'at al-Mudarrisin bi Qum al-Musharrafah, 1416 AH), vol. 1, p. 6.

- ²⁰ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 113.
- ²¹ al-Saduq, *Man La Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, vol. 4, p. 402.
- ²² Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawahir*, vol. 1, p. 106.
- ²³ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 114.
- ²⁴ Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 68, p. 285, citing al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*.
- ²⁵ al-Fattal, *Rawdat al-Wa'izin*, vol. 1, p. 109.
- ²⁶ al-Tabarsi, *al-Ihtijaj*, vol. 2, p. 45.
- ²⁷ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 109.
- ²⁸ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 342.
- ²⁹ *Kanz al-'Ummal*, no. 8249 and 8254.
- ³⁰ Ibn Shu'bah al-Harrani, *Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, (Qum: Muassasat al-Nashr al-Islami al-Tabi'a li Jama'at al-Mudarrisin bi Qum al-Musharrafah, 1404 AH, 2nd ed.), p. 45; *al-'Awali*, vol. 1, p. 264, no. 56.
- ³¹ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, no. 8071.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 136.
- ³⁶ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 204.
- ³⁷ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 357.
- ³⁸ Ibid., p. 358.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 205.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., p. 205.

BOOK 3

❖ Anger ❖

Introduction

With regard to anger, malice and jealousy, know that anger is a flame taken from Allah's own blazing Fire, except that this one does not spread over anything else but the hearts. It is kept hidden in the folds of the heart just as embers lie hidden beneath the ash. In the believers, it is brought out by an ardent zeal for their faith in their hearts, and in the case of tyrannical people, it is brought out by barbaric chauvinism and a deep-rooted sense of superiority in their hearts, which stems from the cursed Satan himself, when he said, 'You created me from fire while you created him from clay' (38:76). The inherent disposition of clay is stillness and gravity, whereas the inherent disposition of fire is blazing rage, dynamism, movement, and the ability to melt things.

Among the consequences of anger are jealousy and malice, and as a result of these two, many perish and many are corrupted, and only a very small amount suffices to that effect. But if that is redressed, then the whole body is reformed again.

The Prophet (S) said,

Anger spoils faith like vinegar spoils honey.¹

الغضب يفسد الايمان كما يفسد الخل العسل.



When someone restrains his anger, Allah will restrain His punishment from him.²

مَنْ كَفَّ غَضَبَهُ كَفَّ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَذَابَهُ.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Indeed this anger is a smouldering ember that Satan kindles in the hearts of the sons of Adam (i.e. human beings). So when one of you gets angry, his eyes redden in rage, his veins protrude out of fury, and Satan enters him. Whenever any of you fear falling into such a state, immediately sit down on the ground, for thereupon, Satan's filth leaves you.

إن هذا الغضب جرة من الشيطان توقد في جوف ابن آدم، وإن أحدكم إذا غضب اجهرت عيناه، وانتفخت اوداجه، ودخل الشيطان فيه، فإذا خاف أحدكم ذلك من نفسه فليلزم الارض، فإن رجز الشيطان يذهب عنه عند ذلك.



Whoever gets angry with one of his own kin should come near him and touch him, for skin contact between blood relations pacifies anger.⁴

أيما رجل غضب على ذي رحم، فليدن منه وليمسّه، فإن الرحم إذا مسّت سكنت.



My father used to say, 'What is worse than anger? A man falls prey to his anger and murders an innocent man or falsely accuses a good woman of fornication.'⁵

وكان أبي يقول: أي شيء أشد من الغضب، إن الرجل يغضب فيقتل النفس التي حرم الله ويقذف المحصنة.



When someone restrains his anger, Allah covers up his flaws and shameful deeds.⁶

من كَفَّ غَضَبَهُ سَتَر اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ.

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It is written in the Torah: 'O son of Adam, remember me in your anger, and I will remember you in Mine.'⁷

ان في التوراة مكتوب: يا بن آدم اذكرني حين تغضب أذكرك حين غضبي.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Anger is the key to every evil.⁸ الغضب مفتاح كل شر.

When someone gets angry with someone below him and feels a sense of power over him, his blood boils. When his anger is directed at someone higher than him [in status], and he despairs of being able to avenge himself, his blood flow constricts all the way from his skin to his heart, and his anger turns into fear; this is why his face pales. If he gets angry with an equal, he alternates between constriction and venting, reddening and paling, and is consumed with exacting revenge.

When this power is ignited within man, it is directed towards countering the harms that it has been created to combat before it flares up. After it flares up, it is directed towards venting it and exacting revenge. Revenge is a force and a desire born out of this power, and has a sweetness that will only be satisfied once it has been taken. People, in their basic primordial nature, fall into three categories with respect to anger: deficiency, excess, and equilibrium.

Deficiency is a lack or a weakness of anger, and this is rebuked, for such a person is one who has no passion. Such a person is inadequate and the symptoms of this are a lack of possessiveness over one's wife, tolerating humiliation at the hands of despicable people, a sense of inferiority and self-depreciation, and lassitude and

complacency when witnessing wrongdoings. Allah has described the best of the Companions as having intensity and zeal:

Severe against the faithless and merciful amongst themselves. (48:29)

Wage jihad against the faithless and the hypocrites, and be severe with them. (9:73; 66:9)

Severity and intensity are effects of the power of anger.

Excessive anger is when anger is so overpowering that it breaks away from the authority of reason and religion and no longer obeys them. Such a person no longer has any insight, reflection, thinking, or choice. Excessive anger may be an inherent trait, or it may be a trait which is adopted by mixing with people who flaunt the venting of their anger and boast about it in the name of bravery and manliness. Such a person may say, 'I'm the kind of person who won't tolerate any deceit or put up with any nonsense.' Although the only meaning of this is that he has no reason, he brags about it ignorantly in public, so whoever hears him is convinced of the virtue of anger and likes to imitate such people. He is then deaf and blind to good counsel, and cannot be guided by the light of his reason as it has been clouded over by the smoke of anger.

Outwardly, extreme anger causes the face to change colour, the extremities to tremble intensely, a departure from orderly and organized action, disturbed movements, and speaking while foaming at the mouth. The cheeks redden, the nostrils flare, and the person cannot compose himself. If this enraged person saw the ugliness of his face in the midst of anger, his anger would subside simply from the shame of seeing the ugliness of his face. His inner ugliness is even worse than his outer ugliness, for the outer simply manifests the inner. The inner self is the

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first to contort in such a way, and then the ugliness and effects of anger spread to the physical countenance and the body.

It causes the tongue to engage in an outpouring of swearing and cursing as well as offensive language that would embarrass sensible people and that the person will feel ashamed of after his anger subsides. Additionally, his speech is incoherent and disturbed.

It causes his limbs to lash out, beat, attack, tear apart, and even kill [the object of his anger] if he can without any thought. If the victim of his rage escapes, or he misses or is unable to retaliate, his anger will be redirected towards himself, and he may tear his clothes and hit his face. He may become bewildered, depressed, and confused, and may collapse, unable to overtake his enemy or to rise from the sheer intensity of his anger as he is gripped in a swoon. He may lash out at objects or animals, throw crockery on the ground, or break tables as he vents out his anger on them. He may even behave like a madman, cursing animals and objects, and speaking to them as if he were speaking to a person with a mind.

It causes the heart to exhibit malice and jealousy, to outwardly display evil intentions, to rejoice at others' misfortunes and grieve at their joys, to be determined to disclose their secrets and faults, and to have similar vices that are all offshoots of excessive anger. The person who possesses such anger must cure himself from his vehement anger. He must stand on the middle path between the two extremes, which is the straight path of truth, finer than a hair and sharper than a sword. If he is unable to, then he must at least try to get as close to this as possible. Allah says:

You will not be able to be fair between wives, even if you are eager to do so. Yet do not turn away from one altogether, leaving her as if in a suspense. (4:129)

Just because someone is unable to be absolutely good, does not mean that he has to be absolutely evil. Some evils are lesser than others, and some good deeds are loftier than others.

The causes of anger

Know that as long as someone loves only what agrees with him and what he needs, and loathes everything that opposes him and harms him, he will never be free from anger and irritation; they will be inherent in his inner nature. Whenever something beloved is taken from him, or something unpleasant is done to him, he will get angry. The extent of this varies from person to person, but all people love certain necessities – as the Prophet (S) pointed out when he said,

Whenever someone wakes up in the morning safe in his dwelling, with a healthy body and provision for the day, it is as if he has all the good of the world at his disposal.⁹

من أصبح آمناً في سربه، معافاً في بدنه، وله قوت يومه، فكأنما خیرت له الدنيا بحذافيرها.

So when someone has insight into the realities of these matters and possesses these three things and whatever he specifically needs, he will understand that he must not become angry unless these are threatened. This means that he is capable of not obeying his anger and of not expressing it outwardly except according to the limits the divine law prescribes and that reason deems suitable. This only comes with striving, self-exertion, and extra effort at being clement and tolerant for a while until clemency and

tolerance become deeply rooted characteristics.

Uprooting the origin of rage and anger from the heart is impossible since it is a necessary part of human nature. However, it is possible to break its vehemence and weaken its force whereby inner infuriation is reduced and weakened to the extent that the effect of his anger is not even displayed on the face, but that is very difficult.

Some might say that pain, rather than anger, is due upon the loss of a necessity. This would mean that someone who, for example, has a sheep for his sole provision, and it dies, should not get angry with anyone, even if he hates what happened, for one should not get angry about everything unpleasant that happens. When someone loses blood through blood-letting or cupping, he feels pain but not anger. A person who fully experiences divine unity and sees all things as being from Allah would not get angry at any of Allah's creatures, for he would see them all suspended in His grasp and power, like a pen in the writer's hand. If a king beheaded him for a crime, he would not get angry at the pen. Anger is, therefore, repelled through the power of divine unity and through holding a good opinion of Allah – to see that everything originates from Allah and that He only wills what is ultimately good. Sometimes that good may come in the form of hunger, sickness, pain, or even death, but a person should not get angry, just as he does not get angry with blood-letting since he sees there is good in it.

We would reply that it is not possible to achieve such a state to that extent. Being immersed in divine unity to that extent is like a flash of lightning that does not last; the heart naturally goes back to directing its attention to intermediaries and cannot ignore them. If this were

possible for anyone, it would have been the Prophet (S). The Commander of the Faithful, however, says,

The Prophet (S) never used to get angry about worldly matters. But when he was angered by the truth, he was unrecognisable, and nothing would get the better of his anger until he triumphed.¹⁰

كان النبي (ص) لا يغضب للدنيا، فإذا أغضبه الحق لم يعرفه أحد، ولم يقم على غضبه شيء حتى ينتصر له.

He only used to get angry over the truth, but even though his anger was for the sake of Allah, he still directed it at the intermediaries without exception. In fact anyone who gets angry with someone who snatches away a bare necessity or basic requirement for a faithful life has in fact expressed his anger for the sake of Allah, and he can never desist from that. He can, however, restrict the rancour to only that which is necessary if the heart becomes pre-occupied with other stimuli. The heart is not a vast arena devoted to anger, for it becomes pre-occupied with other things. If the heart is distracted with other important matters, it will be prevented from feeling anything else.

This is what Salman (A) said when someone abused him,

If my scale of [good] deeds is light, then I am worse than what you are saying. But if my scale of [good] deeds is heavy, then what you say cannot harm me.¹¹

إن خفت موازيني فأنا شر مما تقول، وإن ثقلت موازيني لم يضربني ما تقول.

His sole preoccupation was the Hereafter, so his heart remained unaffected by the abuse. Therefore, one must try to visualise letting go of the fury, either by engaging the heart in something more important, or by seeing everything in the light of divine unity, or through a third

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means – to know that Allah loves him *not* to become enraged, so the intensity of his love for Allah puts out the flames of his anger. This, however, is only possible in rare circumstances.

Treating anger

It is an established fact that all ailments are treated by cutting them off at the source and removing their underlying causes. The causes that spark off anger are self-conceit, self-admiration, pride, derision, mockery, contempt, abuse, disputation, contrariness, betrayal, and intense greed for insignificant wealth or status. They are all despicable moral wrongs, and one can never be rid of anger as long as such traits remain. They must be removed by their opposites.

Self-conceit should be obliterated through humbleness; self-admiration through knowing the inner self. Pride should be removed by constantly acknowledging that it is a vice to be proud, even of one's virtues. Derision should be removed by putting sincere effort into developing virtues and good character. Mocking others should be removed by being kind to people and not even putting one's self down. Abuse should be removed by being cautious not to say anything vile nor answer back sarcastically. Intense greed for material privileges and superiority must be countered through contentment with the bare necessities and seeking out the honour and virtue in being needless and free from want.

Each of the vices and characteristics mentioned above needs training and great exertion in order to be treated. The success of such training depends on knowledge of the disastrous effects of these vices so that the soul becomes

averse to them and is revolted by their vileness. One must persevere diligently with inculcating these opposites for a long time until they become habitual, natural, and easy for the soul. When these are eradicated from the soul, it will have been cleansed and purified of those vices, and subsequently of the anger that is born thereof.

Once anger has flared up, the first treatment is to seek refuge in Allah from Satan. If someone is standing, he should sit; if someone is sitting, he should lie down. He should perform ablution or bathe with cold water since, as narrated from the Prophet (S), anger is a fire within. He should reflect on the merits of restraining his anger, and on pardon, clemency, and forbearance. Allah says:

Take to forgiveness and enjoin good and turn aside from the ignorant. (7:199)

...they curb their anger, and excuse [the faults of] the people, and Allah loves the virtuous. (3:134)

Repel [evil] with what is best. [If you do so,] behold, he between whom and you was enmity, will be as though he were a sympathetic friend. But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is granted it except the greatly endowed. (41:34-35).

The Prophet (S) said,

A servant [of Allah] cannot swallow anything more valuable than his own anger by suppressing it for the sake of Allah.¹²

ما جرع عبد جرعة اعظم قدراً من جرعة غيظ كظمها ابتغاء وجه الله.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

When someone restrains his anger despite being able to vent it, Allah will fill his heart with peace and security.¹³

من كظم غيظاً وهو يقدر على إمضائه حشى الله قلبه أماناً وإيماناً.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

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Allah gives an increase in honour in this world and in the Hereafter to every servant [of Allah] who restrains his anger.¹⁴

ما من عبد كظم غيظاً إلا زاده الله عزاً في الدنيا والآخرة.



Clemency is a sufficient aid.¹⁵ كفى بالحلم ناصراً.



Even if you are not naturally clement, feign clemency.¹⁶

إذا لم تكن حليماً فتَحَلَّم.

At this time, filling oneself with fear of Allah's punishment rather than the prospect of His pardon is paramount. One must remind oneself of the consequences of hostility, enmity, and the enemy's counter-reaction to any act of revenge. Equally, he must visualize the ugliness of his appearance when enraged, by recalling how other people looked in the past when angered. He must also acknowledge that his anger is only incited as a result of his reaction to something unfolding according to Allah's will rather than his own.

The Prophet (S) said,

The children of Adam have been created according to various levels: some are slow to spark off into anger and fast at cooling down, whereas others flare up quickly and are slow to cool down. The best of them are those whose anger is provoked slowly and extinguished quickly, while the worst are those who are quick to flare up and slow to cool down again.¹⁷

ألا إن بني آدم خلقوا على طبقات شتى: منهم بطيء الغضب سريع الفئء، فتلك بتلك، ومنهم سريع الغضب بطيء الفئء، إلا إن خيرهم البطيء الغضب السريع الفئء، وشرهم السريع الغضب البطيء الفئء.

Resentment

Know that when one is compelled to suppress one's anger because of some obstacle to being able to express at the time, it goes back inside and is harboured therein as resentment. The meaning of resentment is to harbour irritation, rancour, and bitter hatred towards someone, and to begrudge them continuously. The Prophet (S) said,

The believer is not resentful.¹⁸ المؤمن ليس بحقد.

Resentment, in turn, gives rise to other things such as jealousy, and that is when the rancour leads him to wish for a blessing to cease from his enemy, so that the latter may grieve at having been afflicted with its loss, and that he may rejoice at the affliction that befell him. Another such consequence is to harbour the jealousy inside to such an extent that it turns into a malicious joy at every adversity that befalls the other. Yet another consequence is ignoring and cutting the person off, even if the latter were to seek him out and approach him. Backbiting and slandering someone wrongfully, spreading rumours about him, divulging his secrets, and talking about him scornfully and mockingly are all such consequences, as are physical attacks that one may carry out to cause pain to someone, and withholding rights of his such as contact with his kin, repaying his debt or returning his due. All of these are expressly prohibited.

There are also lesser degrees of resentment where someone may be on his guard against such evils, but he may still have ill feeling towards the person inside, and he cannot stop his heart from feeling dislike towards them, such that it prevents him from previously favourable interaction with him such as smiling, friendliness, care,

attending to his needs, sitting with him in remembrance of Allah, and being of assistance and benefit to him. Or he may stop praying for him, commending him, and urging him towards goodness and charity. All these feelings decrease one's level of faith, and block Allah's grace from reaching him. The best thing to do in such a situation is to remain in that state (and no worse), and if possible to increase in acts of kindness towards him, combating one's own base self, and fighting Satan; that is the status of the Truthful ones (*siddiqin*).

The Prophet (S) said,

Shall I inform you of the best of all noble characteristics in this world and in the Hereafter? To pardon someone who has wronged you, to reconcile with one who has cut you off, to show kindness towards one who has harmed you, and to give to the one who withheld from you.¹⁹

ألا أخبركم بخير خلائق الدنيا والاخرة، العفو عمن ظلمك، وتصل من قطعك، والإحسان إلى من أساء إليك، وإعطاء من حرمك.



Pardon one another, for pardoning [others] only increases one's honour, so pardon each other's faults and Allah will grant you honour.²⁰

عليكم بالعفو، فإن العفولا يزيد العبد إلا عزاً فتعافوا يعزكم الله.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Regret at having pardoned someone is much easier to bear than regret at having punished them.²¹

الندامة على العفو أفضل وايسر من الندامة على العقوبة.

The Prophet (S) said,

No sooner is leniency added to something than it adorns it, and no sooner is it taken away from something than it spoils it.²²

إن الرفق لم يوضع على شيء إلا زانه ولم ينزع من شيء إلا شانه.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Everything has a lock, and the lock of faith is leniency.²³

إن لكل شيء قفلاً وقفل الإيمان الرفق.



Allah is lenient and loves leniency; He rewards for leniency what He does not reward for sternness.²⁴

إن الله رفيق يحب الرفق ويعطي على الرفق ما لا يعطي على العنف.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

One who is lenient in his dealings will obtain whatever he wants from people.²⁵

من كان رفيقاً في أمره نال ما يريد من الناس.

Imam al-Kazim (A) said,

Leniency is worth half of one's livelihood.²⁶ الرفق نصف العيش.

Jealousy

Know that jealousy is a consequence of anger just like resentment, but jealousy has innumerable reproachable offshoots. Allah, rebuking it, says:

Or are they jealous of the people for what Allah has given them out of His grace? (4:54)

Many of the People of the Book are eager to turn you into unbelievers after your faith, out of jealousy from inside themselves. (2:109)

If some good should befall you, it upsets them, but if some ill should befall you, they rejoice at it. (3:120)

Allah has also mentioned how Joseph's brothers were jealous of him. He details what they harboured inside

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their hearts and the vices this jealousy led them to – such as their satisfaction at killing him – and everything that befell them because of this jealousy.

The Prophet (S) said,

Jealousy consumes good deeds like fire consumes dry wood.²⁷

الحسد يأكل الحسنات كما تأكل النار الحطب.

Allah, the Exalted, said to Moses, the son of 'Imran: 'O son of 'Imran, do not be jealous of people over My blessings that I have bestowed upon them. Do not cast your eyes towards this or let your soul succumb to it, for a jealous person is displeased with My blessings and rejects the share which I have allotted to all My servants. The jealous person and I have nothing to do with each other.'²⁸

قال الله تعالى لموسى بن عمران: يا ابن عمران لا تحسدن الناس على ما آتيتهم من فضل، ولا تمدن عينيك إلى ذلك، ولا تتبعه نفسك، فإن الحاسد ساخط لنعمي، صاڈ لقسمي الذي قسمت بين عبادي، ومن يك كذلك فلست منه وليس مني.



Be cautious when acquiring what you need, for all who are blessed are envied.²⁹

استعينوا عل قضاء الحوائج بالكتمان فإن كل ذي نعمة محسود.



There are three things no one is safe from: suspicion, jealousy, and evil omens. I will tell you how to escape them. If you suspect someone, do not investigate your suspicion. If you sense an evil omen, pass it by. If you become jealous, do not act on it.³⁰

ثلاثة لا ينجو منهم أحد، الظن والحسد والطيرة، وسأحدثكم بالخروج من ذلك، إذا ظنت فلا تحقق، وإذا تطيرت فامض، وإذا حسدت فلا تبغ.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

The bane of religion is jealousy, self-admiration, and pride.³¹

آفة الدين الحسد والعجب والفخر.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

The jealous person harms himself before he harms the person he is jealous of. Such was the case with Iblis, whose jealousy brought the [divine] curse upon himself while causing Adam to be chosen, guided, and elevated to the level of taking a covenant with Allah. So let others be jealous of you; do not be jealous. For a jealous person's scale of deeds will always be light due to the weight of his victim's deeds. How will jealousy benefit the jealous person, when sustenance is apportioned, and jealousy will not harm the victim? The root of jealousy is blindness of the heart and rejection of Allah's grace; these are the two wings of disbelief. Due to jealousy, the son of Adam falls into endless distress and destruction to the extent that he can no longer save himself, since there is no repentance for a jealous person since he persists in his sin, convinced of what he has ingrained inside himself. It appears – unopposed, unreasonably. A person's basic nature does not depart from its roots, even if it is treated.³²

الحاسد مضرٌ بنفسه قبل أن يضر بالحسود، كإبليس أورث بحسده لنفسه اللعنة، و لآدم الاجتباء و الهدى و الرفع إلى محل حقائق العهد و الاصطفاء، فكان محسودا و لا تكن حاسدا، فإن ميزان الحاسد أبدا خفيف يثقل ميزان الحسود و الرزق مقسوم، فماذا ينفع الحسد الحاسد وماذا يضر الحسود الحسد، والحسد أصله من عوى القلب، وجحود فضل الله، وهما جناحان للكفر بالحسد وقع ابن آدم في حسرة الأبد، وهلك مهلكا لا ينجو منه أبدا، ولا توبة للحاسد لأنه مضرٌ عليه معتقد به مطبوع فيه، يبدو بلا معارض به و لا سبب، والطبع لا يتغير عن الأصل و إن عوج.

What is jealousy?

Jealousy means to be unhappy when a blessing is bestowed on someone and to be happy when that blessing is taken away. When someone does not want that blessing to be taken away and does not begrudge its continuation for that person, but instead wishes the same for himself, this is called 'envious longing' or 'competition'. Allah says:

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And for that, let the contenders contend. (83:26)

This type of envy is permissible for worldly matters and recommended in matters of religion.

The Prophet (S) said,

A believer feels envious longing, but a hypocrite feels jealous.³³

المؤمن يغيظ والمنافق يحسد.



There should be no jealousy except over two types of people: someone whom Allah has granted wealth which he dedicates to spending on rightful things, and someone whom Allah has granted knowledge which he acts upon and teaches people.³⁴

لا حسد إلا في اثنين، رجل آتاه الله مالاً فسلطه علىهلكته في الحق، ورجل آتاه الله علماً فهو يعمل به ويعلمه للناس.

This type of envious longing is often called jealousy, just as jealousy is often called competition. If a blessing is bestowed upon a disbeliever or a corrupt person who uses it to cause mischief, spread vice, or harm people, then it is not wrong to begrudge him of it or to wish for it to be taken away from him since it is being used as a tool for corruption – not because it is a blessing.

The underlying causes of the negative type of jealousy are enmity, self-importance, arrogance, astonishment, fear of losing a desired goal, love of power, and despicableness and meanness in the soul. A person may hate it when a blessing is bestowed upon someone because that person is his enemy and he does not wish him well, or because he knows that that person will become arrogant, and his own sense of self-importance cannot tolerate that person's arrogance and prideful boasting; this is what is meant by being vainglorious. He may also naturally feel that he is

better than the person he is jealous of, and hence try to prevent this blessing from reaching him; this is the meaning of arrogance. Or, the blessing may be so great, the status so lofty, that he is astounded and cannot fathom how such a person can gain so much; this is what is meant by astonishment. He may equally fear the loss of his own aspirations due to the other person's blessing lest he use it to reach the same goal and pose a threat to his goals. His jealousy may also be fuelled by a love of supremacy, which is based on the desire for exclusivity in everything, wanting no one to share it.

Alternatively, jealousy may not be caused by any of these factors. It may simply come from an innate meanness in the soul and covetousness of any good that comes to Allah's servants – even if this blessing would never come to him.

Jealousy may be caused by a combination of these factors, or even most of them, in which case the jealousy will become so powerful that the jealous person will be unable to conceal it or even feign courtesy. It will rip the veil of politeness, and the animosity will become clear.

The source of jealousy

The factors mentioned above are most prevalent among people who are bound by common interests, who may attend the same gatherings or share the same goals. If someone is competing with an associate for something, his nature begins to dislike him, he develops an aversion to him, and resentment sets in. After that, he wants to belittle him to get the better of him, and to get back at him for contesting with him in what he wants, and he despises the blessings that enabled this person to attain this objective.

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If two people living in different towns have no such shared connection, there will be no jealousy between them. However, if they are neighbours, or their paths cross in the marketplace, at the mosque, or at school, they may seek to attain the same goals, and their objectives may clash. From this clash are born strife, discord, and all the other factors in turn.

This is why you see that a scholar is jealous of another scholar, not a layperson, while laypeople are jealous of each other rather than scholars. Similarly, a businessman will be jealous of another businessman, unless it is for a reason that has nothing to do with their shared profession. A man is always more jealous of his own brother or cousin than strangers, and a woman is always more jealous of her husband's other wife or concubine than his mother or daughter. All this is due to a clash of interests. Of course, someone with an intense desire for power or fame due to a particular talent will be jealous of anyone in the world who shares the talent that he prides himself on.

The source of all of this is love of the world. It is the world that is too constricted for clashing interests to co-exist; the Hereafter does not have such restrictions. In fact, knowledge about the Hereafter is a beautiful representation of the Hereafter, for undoubtedly someone who has acquired knowledge of Allah, His attributes, His angels, and His dominion in the earth and sky will not be jealous of someone else who also knows these truths, for true knowledge can never restrict the gnostics. A single truth may be known by thousands upon thousands of scholars who all will delight in this knowledge, and their delight will not decrease in the slightest if another comes

to know of it. In fact, the more who know it, the more intimacy and common ground there will be between them, and the more they will benefit from it, for knowledge of Allah is a vast and boundless ocean, as is nearness to Him; it has no restriction. The ultimate pleasure in Allah is the delight of meeting Him, and this is unrestricted; indeed, the intimacy increases as more people join in.

Of course, if the scholars' goal of their knowledge is wealth or status, they will definitely be jealous of each other, for wealth is a tangible, material entity; when it falls into one person's hands, it limits others' attainment of it. Status is achieved by having a hold over people's hearts, and when someone is filled with admiration for one scholar, his admiration for another will be reduced or eliminated, and this causes rivalry between scholars.

A fatal disease

Know that jealousy is a fatal disease of the heart and can only be cured through knowledge and righteous deeds. The knowledge which alleviates the disease of jealousy is recognizing that jealousy is harmful to you – both to your faith and your worldly life – but not to the victim – neither in his faith nor in his worldly life; rather, he stands to benefit in both areas. As soon as you gain insight into this and stop being an enemy to yourself and a friend to your enemy, your jealousy will undoubtedly be removed.

Jealousy harms your faith because it makes you resent Allah's decree and despise the blessing that He has allotted to His servants. It makes you reject, abhor, and find fault with His justice that He establishes in His

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kingdom with His subtle wisdom. This is a crime against the very basis of divine unity and is detrimental to faith.

Not only is it a crime against your faith, but you also are being disloyal to a believer. You stop wishing him well and separate yourself from Allah's guides and prophets who wish the best for all of Allah's servants. Instead, you become an accomplice to Satan and the disbelievers, for they love to see afflictions befall the believers and for blessings to be wrested away from them. This filth in the heart eats away the good deeds in it, just like fire eats away dry wood, and effaces good deeds just like night effaces the day.

Jealousy harms your worldly life because you hurt yourself as a result of it. You torment yourself and are continuously anxious and grieved. Since Allah does not take away the blessings He bestowed upon your enemies, you suffer inside, tormented by every blessing that you see descending upon them, pained at every affliction averted from them. In your heart, you remain sad, grieved, and perturbed. The more you wish the person ill, the more irritated you become, just as your enemy feels the same way about you. You wanted misfortune to afflict your enemy, but in fact it afflicted you, for someone's blessings will not cease because of your jealousy. If blessings did cease because of jealousy, Allah would never let a single blessing remain on you or any other creature, not even the blessing of faith, because disbelievers covet the believers' faith. Allah says:

A group of the People of the Book were eager to lead you astray; yet they lead no one astray except themselves, but they are not aware. (3:69)

The prosperity or blessing that Allah has decreed must

continue until the destined end that Allah has decreed for it, and cannot be repelled by any plot. Every single thing is duly apportioned and decreed, and with Him is a written record of every decree. Just as a blessing does not cease as a result of jealousy, similarly the victim of jealousy is neither harmed in this world nor in the Hereafter.

That the victim benefits in his faith and his worldly life is clear. He benefits in his faith because he is oppressed by you, especially if you act on your jealousy in your words and actions – slandering him, backbiting him, divulging his secrets, and revealing his flaws. These all turn into gifts which are bestowed on him. Your good deeds are transferred to his scale until you are left destitute and devoid of all goodness on the Day of Judgment, just as you were deprived of it in your worldly life. Through your jealousy, blessing upon blessing reaches him, whereas misfortune upon misfortune reaches you.

He benefits in his worldly life, in that one of a person's primary interests is to see his enemies suffer, grieve, and undergo misfortune, torment, and pain. Since there is no torment greater than the pain of jealousy, you suffer inside. You do to yourself what they might wish upon you.

A jealous person, therefore, must overcome his jealousy, so that every time it impels him to say or do something, he must do the opposite. If his jealousy urges him to slander someone, he must force his tongue to praise him instead. If it urges him to act arrogantly towards someone, he must force himself to act humbly and apologise instead. If it urges him to deny that person something, he must force himself to give more. The more

obliging he is, the more the victim will realise this. The victim's heart will incline towards him, and he will love him. As the victim shows love to the jealous person, the jealous person will return that love and show it back. Out of that will be born a new understanding that will shatter the building blocks of jealousy and will instil this obligingness as a natural disposition. The root of the treatment of jealousy lies in uprooting its causes, which are pride, self-admiration, and intense greed – as we will expound upon next.

Notes

¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kaḥfī*, vol. 2, p. 302; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 156.

² al-Kulayni, *al-Kaḥfī*, vol. 2, p. 305, also narrated as, 'Allah will restrain the punishment of the Day of Judgment from whoever restrains his anger from people.'

³ Ibid., p. 304.

⁴ Ibid., p. 302.

⁵ Ibid., p. 303.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.; al-Harrani, *Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, p. 362.

⁹ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 161; al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 115

¹⁰ Quoted by al-Tirmidhi in *al-Shama'il* (n.l.: n.d.).

¹¹ A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary texts of *hadith*.

¹² al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 166; Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 124.

¹³ al-Kulayni, *al-Kaḥfī*, vol. 2, p. 110; Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 124.

¹⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kaḥfī*, vol. 2, p. 110.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 112.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 171.

- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 107
- ²⁰ Ibid., p. 108.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Ibid., p. 109.
- ²³ Ibid., p. 118.
- ²⁴ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 175.
- ²⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 120.
- ²⁶ al-Harrani, *Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, p. 56.
- ²⁷ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 126; al-Daylami, *Irshad al-Qulub*, p. 130; al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 306; Abu al-Fath al-Karajiki, *Kanz al-Fawa'id*, (Qum: Maktabat al-Mustafawi, 1990), vol. 1, p. 57.
- ²⁸ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 307.
- ²⁹ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 127; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 177; al-Harrani, *Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, p. 48.
- ³⁰ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 177. Another narration says that people 'rarely are safe' from these things.
- ³¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 307.
- ³² al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 104.
- ³³ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 307. It has also been cited as, 'The believer merely has envious longing and is not jealous, while the hypocrite is jealous and does not stop at mere envious longing'.
- ³⁴ Muhammad ibn Yazid ibn Majah al-Qazwini, *Sunan ibn Majah* (Dar al-Fikr li al-Taba'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawdi'), vol. 2, p. 1407.

Showing Off, Arrogance & Self-Admiration

Introduction

Know that showing off in worship is forbidden, and that Allah despises a show-off. Allah says:

Woe to those who pray: those who are heedless of their prayers, those who show off, but deny aid. (107:4-7)

When they stand up for prayer, they stand up lazily, showing off to the people and not remembering Allah except a little. (4:142)

Do not render your charity void by reproaches and affronts, like those who spend their wealth to be seen by people. (2:264)

The Prophet (S) said,

Allah, the Exalted, said, 'When someone performs a deed for Me as well as for someone else, the latter can have it all, and I disassociate Myself from it. I am the most self-sufficient and do not need anything to be associated with Me.'¹

يقول الله تعالى: من عمل عملاً أشرك فيه غيري فهو له كله وأنا منه بريء، وأنا أغني الأغنياء عن الشرك.



Even the slightest amount of showing off is polytheism.²

إن أدنى الرياء شرك.



There will come a time when people's insides will be rotten but their outsides attractive. In their ambition for this world, they will not want what is with their Lord. Their religion will be a façade, for fear of Allah will not enter them. So Allah will surround them with His chastisement. They will call upon Him with the prayer of one who is drowning but will find no answer.³

سيأتي على الناس زمان تحبث فيه سرائرهم وتحسن فيه علانيتهم طمعاً في الدنيا، لا يريدون به ما عند ربهم، يكون دينهم رياء، لا يخالطهم خوف، فيعمهم الله بعقاب، فيدعونه دعاء الغريق فلا يستجاب لهم.



The angel ascends carrying the good deeds of the servant [of Allah], but as he ascends, Allah tells him, 'Place them in Sijjin,'⁴ for he did not do these deeds for Me.⁵

ان الملك ليصعد بعمل العبد ميتجاً به فاذا صعد بحسناته يقول الله تعالى: اجعلوها في سجين إنه ليس إياي أراد بها.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

Fear Allah with a fear that grants no excuses, and work for Allah without seeking to be seen or heard, for when someone performs good deeds for other than Allah, Allah will leave him to his own works.⁶

اخشوا الله خشية ليست بتعذير، واعملوا لله في غير رياء ولا سمعة، فإنه من عمل لغير الله وكله الله إلى عمله.



There are three signs of a show-off: he is energetic among people, he is lazy when alone, and he loves to be praised for everything.⁷

ثلاث علامات للمرائي، ينشط إذا رأى الناس، ويكسل إذا كان وحده، ويحب أن يحمد في جميع أموره.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

'Remaining steadfast upon a good deed is more difficult than the deed itself.'

He was asked, 'What is remaining steadfast upon a deed?'

He replied, 'When a man reconciles with someone or gives charity solely for Allah, not associating any partner to Him, then it is recorded for him as a deed done secretly. Then, if he mentions it, it is erased and recorded instead as a deed done openly. After that, if he mentions it again, it is erased and recorded as showing off.⁸

قال (ع): الإبقاء على العمل أشد من العمل، قيل: وما الإبقاء على العمل؟ قال أن يصل الرجل بصلة وينفق نفقة لله وحده لا شريك له فكتب له سرّاً، ثم يذكرها فتمحي فكتب له علانية، ثم يذكرها فتمحي وتكتب له رياء.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Allah, the Exalted, said, 'I am the best partner, so I will never accept the actions of anyone who associates a partner with Me unless those actions have been performed exclusively for Me.'⁹

قال الله تعالى: أنا خير شريك من أشرك معي غيري في عمل عمله لم أقبله إلا ما كان لي خالصاً.



Every instance of showing off is polytheism. Whoever acts for the people will receive his reward from the people, and whoever acts for Allah will receive his reward from Allah.¹⁰

كل رياء شرك، إنه من عمل للناس كان ثوابه على الناس، ومن عمل لله كان ثوابه على الله.

Regarding Allah's words 'So whoever expects to encounter his Lord, let him act righteously, and not associate anyone with the worship of his Lord' (18:110), he said,

Someone performs a good deed seeking not the pleasure of Allah but rather the commendation of people, and he wants the people to hear about it. This is the person who has associated others with the worship of His Lord.

Whenever any servant [of Allah] performs a good deed in secret, after some time, Allah manifests good for him. Whenever any servant [of Allah] commits an evil deed in secret, after some time, Allah manifests evil for him.¹¹

الرجل يعمل شيئاً من الثواب لا يطلب به وجه الله، إنما يطلب تزكية الناس، يشتهي أن يسمع به الناس فهذا الذي اشرك بعبادة ربه. ثم قال: ما من عبد أسر خيراً فذهبت الأيام أبداً، حتى يظهر الله له خيراً، وما من عبد يسر شراً، فذهبت الأيام حتى يظهر الله له شراً.

He also said,

What are people doing when they show their good deeds and hide their sins? Does this not reflect on the state of their own selves? Surely they know this is not how it should be. Allah, Mighty and Exalted, says: 'Rather, people are witnesses upon themselves' (75:14). If the inside is healthy, the outside will be healthy.¹²

ما يصنع أحدكم أن يظهر حسناً ويسر سيئاً، أليس يرجع إلى نفسه فيعلم أن ذلك ليس كذلك والله عز وجل يقول: بل الإنسان على نفسه بصيرة، إن السريرة إذا صحت قويت العلانية.



When someone does a little for the sake of Allah, Allah makes his deeds appear greater than what he intended. And when someone does a lot for the sake of people, exhausting his body and staying awake at night, Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, rejects it and reduces his worth in the eyes of those who hear about him.¹³

من أراد الله بالقليل من عمله أظهر الله له أكثر مما أراد، ومن أراد الناس بالكثير من عمله في تعب من بدنه وسهر من ليله، أبى الله عز وجل إلا أن يقلله في عين من سمعه.

If he originally intended to conceal his act of worship and perform it exclusively for Allah, there is nothing wrong with feeling happy when Allah causes others to find out about it. He acknowledges that it is Allah who informed them and displayed this beautiful aspect of him, and as a result he marvels at Allah's goodness, attention, and kindness towards him. He, therefore, hides his acts of

worship and his sins, and Allah conceals his sins but publicizes his good deeds. He is happy because of Allah's favourable gaze towards him, not because of people's praise or some status that he has acquired in their hearts. Allah says:

Say, 'In Allah's grace and His mercy – let them rejoice in that!' (10:58)

Since Allah has publicized his beautiful deeds and concealed his ugly deeds in this world, he can conclude that Allah will do the same for him in the Hereafter. The Prophet (S) said,

When Allah conceals a person's faults in this world, He will also conceal them in the Hereafter. He should rejoice both in his deeds being accepted now and in what this implies for the future.¹⁴

ما ستر الله على عبد في الدنيا إلا ستر عليه في الآخرة، فيكون الأول فرحاً بالقبول في الحال، وهذا الثبات إلى المستقبل.

Similarly, if he thinks that onlookers will be encouraged to do the same in obedience (to Allah), his reward will be doubled, for he will receive the reward of a public deed – as it ended up being – as well as a private deed, which is what he originally intended. Whenever anyone follows him and does the same, he will also receive the reward of their deeds without them losing any of their reward. Such is the case when he rejoices in their obedience towards Allah and their praise and love since their hearts have inclined towards obedience.

It is narrated that a man asked the Prophet (S),

'O Messenger of Allah, I performed a deed discreetly, not wanting anyone to find out about it, but someone found out about it, and it made me feel good about it inside.'

He replied, 'You get two rewards: the reward of a private deed as well

as the reward of a public deed.¹⁵

رُوي أن رجلاً قال لرسول الله (ص): يا رسول الله أسرُّ العمل، لا أحب أن يطلع عليه أحد فيطلع عليه فيسرِّي. قال: لك أجران، أجر السر وأجر العلانية.

Imam al-Baqir (A) was asked about a man who sincerely performs a good deed, which someone happens to see, and this made him feel good about it. He said,

It does not matter – everyone naturally wants people to see them as good – as long as he did not [originally] perform the action for that purpose.¹⁶

لا بأس، ما من أحد إلا وهو يحب أن يظهر الله له في الناس الخير، إذا لم يكن صنع ذلك لذلك.

The same goes for concealing one's misdeeds. It should not be done to make others think someone is pious. Rather, it should be done to avoid exposure and dishonour, and because concealing one's sins is a command, and exposing them to others is abominable. Or, it should be done because it would be too painful to bear others' reproach, for they are allowed to reproach him for a public sin; or because people will be witnesses to it [on the Day of Judgment]; or because the one reproaching him may end up sinning by levelling the reproach against someone else too. Or, he may fear that some harm will befall him as a result; or simply out of shame, to uphold his self-respect; as the saying goes, 'Modesty is all good; modesty is a branch of faith.' Or, he may conceal it lest others imitate him, or because he appreciates how much people love him and knows thereby that this is a reflection of Allah's love for him, for when Allah loves someone, he makes that person beloved in the hearts of the people.

Showing off in worship

Know that a person shows off in worship when he loves the sweetness of praise, flees the pain of criticism, or covets what others possess. When the servant [of Allah] realises the evils of showing off – how he will lose his soundness of heart, how he will be deprived of divine help in this world, and how he will be deprived of his position in the next, as well as the chastisement, disgrace, and wrath he will face – and if he compares what he gained from making himself look good before the people with the divine reward that he will miss out on in the Hereafter – he will abandon showing off. Perhaps he might only need one sincere action to tip his scale in favour of his good deeds, but if it is corrupted by showing off, it becomes a sin, tipping the scale the other way and throwing him into the Fire.

Additionally, he will be alleviated of his anxiety at always having to pay attention to other people's thoughts, for people's approval can never be attained. The more he pleases one group, the more he will displease another, for the pleasure of some lies in the displeasure of others. When someone tries to please people at the cost of displeasing Allah, not only will Allah be displeased with him, but He will also cause those same people to disapprove of him. What can he hope to attain from their praise if it earns him Allah's rebuke? Their praise can neither increase his sustenance nor his lifespan, nor will it be of any use to him on the day of his poverty and destitution – the Day of Judgment.

If he covets others' possessions, he should remember that Allah subjugates the hearts through giving and withholding. People are completely dependent on Him; no

one sustains us but Allah. Someone who expects things from other people will always be humiliated and demeaned. If he gets what he wants from them, he will be perpetually indebted and degraded. If, in his heart he understands the damage this causes, his desire for praise will abate, and he will turn his heart to Allah. It should suffice him to understand that if the people he is trying to impress knew his underlying desire to show off, they would despise him – and that Allah will divulge that and make him despicable in people's eyes. If, however, he devotes himself sincerely to Allah, Allah will reveal his sincerity to them, make him beloved to them, subjugate them before him, make their tongues sing his praise, and commend him to them – even though there is nothing to be gained from their praise and nothing to lose from their rebuke.

Then he must return to performing his worship in private, behind closed doors, just as indecencies are committed behind closed doors, so that his heart is contented with Allah's knowledge and awareness of his worship, and his self does not fight to get him to let anyone other than Allah know about his worship. As he first tries this, it may be difficult, but if he perseveres for a while, it will become easier to bear through Allah's grace and the divine help that He extends to His servants. However, Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves, so it is up to the servant to strive and up to Allah to guide.

Allah does not allow the reward of those who do good to be lost.
(9:120)

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says,

Showing off most commonly occurs in how people look at each other,

eat, speak, walk, sit, dress, laugh, pray, perform the pilgrimage, perform *jihad*, recite the Qur'an, and carry out all other outward acts of worship. However, when someone is sincerely devoted to Allah, and his heart is humble before Him – when he sees himself as lacking even after he tried his best – he will find that, in the end, Allah is pleased with him, and he will be one of those who are most likely to succeed at ridding themselves of showing off and hypocrisy, provided that he remains steadfast in that mind-set.¹⁷

أكثر ما يقع الرياء في النظر والأكل والكلام والمشي والجلاسة واللباس والضحك والصلاة والحج والجهاد وقراءة القرآن، وسائر العبادات الظاهرة، ومن أخلص لله باطنه وخشع له قلبه ورأى نفسه مقصراً بعد بذل الجهد، وجد الشكر عليه حاصلاً، ويكون ممن يرجي له الخلاص من الرياء والنفاق، إذا استقام على ذلك في كل حال.

When showing off is recommended

Showing off in matters other than worship may be recommended and may even be required, since a believer must uphold his honour and must not do anything to shame himself. A person who carries himself with nobility should not behave indecently or basely – even towards himself – in public view, even through something permissible in private. Of course, this varies from time to time, from place to place, and from person to person, so this must be taken into account.

It is narrated that Imam al-Sadiq (A) once saw that a man from Medina had bought something and was carrying it. When the man saw him, he became embarrassed, so the Imam (A) said,

You have bought it for your family and are carrying it back to them. By Allah, were it not for the townspeople, I would have liked to buy it for my family and take it back to them.¹⁸

اشتريته لعيالك وحملته إليهم، أما والله لولا أهل المدينة، لأحببت أن أشتري لعيالي الشيء ثم أحمله إليهم.

He meant that, were it not for concern that the people would point fingers at him, he would have done the same, even though his grandfather 'Ali (A), the Commander of the Faithful, used to do that. It was appropriate at that time because, in that age, the Commander of the Faithful would not have been criticized for doing that; instead, it would have been a source of pride and an example.

It is narrated that the Prophet (S) wanted to go out and meet his companions one day, so he looked at his reflection in a bucket of water to adjust his turban and hair. He was asked,

'Are *you* doing that, O Messenger of Allah?'

He replied, 'Yes. Allah likes His servant to adorn himself when he goes out to meet his brothers.'¹⁹

قيل له: أو تفعل ذلك يا رسول الله؟ فقال: نعم إن الله يحب من العبد أن يتزين لإخوانه إذا خرج إليهم

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

You should adorn yourself for your Muslim brother just like you adorn yourself for a stranger whom you want to make a good impression on.²⁰

ليتزين أحدكم لأخيه المسلم كما يتزين للغريب الذي يحب أن يراه في أحسن هيئة.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

The immaculately clean robe stifles the enemy.²¹

الثوب النقي يكبت العدو.

This type of showing off is desirable.

Pride

Pride arises from self-admiration, and arrogance springs from spite, jealousy, and showing off. Allah has censured

arrogance in various places in His Book. He says:

Soon I shall turn away from My signs those who are unduly arrogant in the earth. (7:146)

That is how Allah seals the heart of every arrogant tyrant. (40:35)

The Prophet (S) said,

Someone with even a mustard seed's worth of pride in his heart will never enter Heaven.²²

لا يدخل الجنة من كان في قلبه مثقال حبة من خردل من كبر.



When someone considers himself great and struts pompously, Allah will be wrathful towards him when he meets Him.²³

من تعظم في نفسه واختال في مشيه، لقي الله وهو عليه غضبان.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Pride is the garment of Allah. An arrogant person tries to wrest this garment from Allah.²⁴

الكبر رداء الله، والمتكبر ينازع الله رداءه.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Pride is holding people in contempt and ridiculing the truth.²⁵

الكبر أن تغمض الناس وتسفه الحق.

In another narration, he explained this statement by saying 'Ridiculing the truth is when someone is ignorant of the truth yet disparages its adherents'.²⁶

سفه الحق بأن يجهل الحق ويطن على أهله، والغمص بتحقير الناس والتجبر عليهم.

– and he holds people in contempt by scorning and belittling them.

He also said,

Every arrogant and tyrannical person is like that because of a sense of inferiority that he has within himself.²⁷

ما من أحد تكبر أو تحبّر إلا لذلة وجدها في نفسه.



There is a valley called Saqar in Hell; it is reserved for arrogant people. The punishment in this valley will be so severe that it will complain to Allah about the intensity of its heat. It will ask Allah for permission to breathe, and with its breath, it will inflame all of Hell.²⁸

إن في جهنم لوادياً للمتكبرين يقال له سقر، شكى إلى الله شدة حرّه وسأله أن يأذن له أن يتنفس فتنفس فأحرق جهنم.



On the Day of Resurrection, the arrogant people will be formed into tiny ants, and people will trample on them until Allah finishes His accounting of His creatures.²⁹

إن المتكبرين يجعلون في صور الذرّ، يتوطأهم الناس حتى يفرغ الله من الحساب.



In the heavens, there are two angels who are responsible for Allah's servants. They elevate whoever is humble for the sake of Allah and humiliate whoever is proud.³⁰

إن في السماء ملكين موكلين بالعباد، فمن تواضع رفعاه ومن تكبر وضعاه.

It is narrated that the Prophet (S) said,

No sooner does someone humble himself for the sake of Allah than Allah elevates him.³¹

ما تواضع أحد لله إلا رفعه الله تعالى.



It pleases me greatly when a man carries something by hand to serve his family, for it removes pride from him.³²

إنه ليعجبني أن يحمل الرجل الشيء في يده فيكون مهنة لأهله يدفع به الكبر عن نفسه.

It is also narrated that he once asked his companions,

'Why do I not see the sweetness of worship in you?'

They asked, 'What is the sweetness of worship?'

He replied, 'Humbleness.'³³

قال لأصحابه: ما لي لا أرى عليكم حلاوة العبادة؟ قالوا: وما حلاوة العبادة؟ قال: التواضع.

He also said,

When you see the humble people of my community, humble yourselves before them; and when you see the arrogant people of my community, behave proudly towards them since that is humiliating and belittling for them.³⁴

إذا رأيتم المتواضعين من أمّتي فتواضعوا لهم، وإذا رأيتم المتكبرين فتكبروا عليهم، فإن ذلك لهم مدّة وصغار.

It is narrated,

Imam al-Sajjad (A) was riding on his donkey and passed some lepers who were eating lunch. They invited him to join them.

He replied, 'Were I not fasting, I would join you.'

Then, when he returned home, he ordered the choicest of foods to be prepared and invited the lepers to a meal, which they accepted, and he sat and ate with them.³⁵

عن السجاد (ع) انه مرّ على المجذومين وهو راكب حماره وهم يتغذون فدعوه إلى الغذاء فقال: أما لولا اني صائم لفعلت، فلما صار إلى منزله أمر بطعام فصنع وأمر أن يتنوقوا فيه، ثم دعاهم فتغذوا عنده وتغذى معهم.

Imam al-Kazim (A) said,

Humbleness is that you give people what you yourself like to be given.³⁶

إن التواضع أن تعطي الناس ما تحب أن تعطاه.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

Humbleness is the basis of every noble honour and important rank. If humbleness had a language that people understood, it would speak of the realities that are hidden in the outcomes of affairs. Humbleness is whatever is undertaken for Allah and in Allah, and anything other than that is artifice. When someone humbles himself before Allah, Allah will raise him in honour over many of His bondsmen. The people of humility have distinct signs and are recognized by them by the dwellers of the heavens, the angels, and the gnostics on the earth.

Allah, the Exalted, says in the Qur'an, 'And on the Elevations will be certain men who recognize each of them by their mark' (7:46).

The root of humbleness comes from acknowledging the majesty, awe, and grandeur of Allah. There is no act of worship more beloved and acceptable to Allah than one performed with humility. No one knows the true significance of humility except His closest bondsmen who are firmly connected with His unity. Allah, the Exalted, says, 'The servants of the All-beneficent are those who walk humbly on the earth, and when the ignorant address them, say, "Peace!"' (25:63). Allah, Mighty and Exalted, commanded the best of His creatures and the master of all its people, Muhammad (S), to be humble, by saying, 'And lower your wing to the faithful who follow you from among the believers' (26:215).

Humbleness is the planting ground for submission, humility, fear, and modesty to grow, and this is the only place that these qualities appear. True and perfect nobility is only worthy of those who humble themselves before Allah.³⁷

التواضع اصل كل شرف نفيس ومرتبة رفيعة، ولو كان للتواضع لغة يفهمها الخلق لنتطق عن حقائق ما في مخفيات العواقب. والتواضع ما يكون لله وفي الله، وما سواه مكر. ومن تواضع لله شرفه الله على كثير من عباده. ولاهل التواضع علامات يعرفها أهل السماوات من الملائكة واهل الارض من العارفين...

والتواضع مزرعة الخشوع والخشوع والخشية والحياء، وأنهن لا يأتين إلا منها ولا يسلم الشرف

التام الحقيقي إلا للمتواضع في ذات الله.

Arrogance

Arrogance may be directed at Allah, as Nimrod and Pharaoh did, or at His prophets, as did those who used to remark, 'Are these the ones that Allah has favoured from among us?' (6:53). It may also be directed at other people when someone esteems himself and looks at others with disdain, such that even if he hears the truth from one of Allah's servants, he would have an aversion to accepting it and recoil from it in disgust – as is the case with most who compete in various scholastic fields and try to overpower or silence their opponents. People may also be arrogant over knowledge, worship, piety, social standing, lineage, beauty, wealth, strength, and their number of partisans or followers.

People become arrogant over knowledge for two reasons. First, they may busy themselves with something called 'knowledge' – but which is not true knowledge. Second, they may delve into knowledge while their souls are contaminated and their character unrefined, for they have not disciplined their souls through the 'inner jihad' or purified their souls through worshipping their Lord. If these people dive into knowledge – in any field – it settles in polluted areas of their hearts and neither bears good fruit nor manifests virtuous effects.

The cure is to know that arrogance does not befit anyone other than Allah alone. Since Allah despises the arrogant and loves the humble, an arrogant person must compel himself to be as his Master wants him. He should also know that Allah has a stricter argument against those

who possess knowledge, and there are things that He will tolerate from the ignorant but not from the knowledgeable. He should also recognise that disobeying Allah knowingly is an even more abominable crime, for it involves failure to acknowledge the blessing of Allah – knowledge – that Allah has bestowed upon him.

This is why the Prophet (S) said,

On the Day of Judgment, the knowledgeable person will be taken to Hell, and his bowels will gush forth, and he will circle them like a donkey circles a mill-stone. The inmates of the Fire will gather around him and ask, 'What happened to you?' He will reply, 'I used to exhort goodness but did not uphold it myself, and I used to forbid wrongdoing but commit it myself.'³⁸

يؤتى بالعالم يوم القيامة فيلقى في النار، فتدلق أقتابه فيدور بها كما يدور الحمار بالرحى، فيطيف به أهل النار فيقولون ما لك؟ فيقول كنت آمر بالخير ولا آتية وأنهى عن الشر و آتية.

Allah has also likened the scholars of the Jews to donkeys,³⁹ and Bal'am ibn Ba'ura to a dog.⁴⁰

Jesus, son of Mary (A), said,

Woe be upon corrupt scholars: how the raging flames will consume them!⁴¹

ويل لعلماء السوء كيف يتلظى عليهم النار.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

An ignorant person will be forgiven seventy sins before a scholar is forgiven one.⁴²

يفغر للجاهل سبعون ذنباً قبل أن يغفر للعالم ذنب واحد.

A worshipper should be careful to remember not to be arrogant towards someone with more knowledge. It would not befit him to be arrogant towards him when he acknowledges the virtue of knowledge. Although knowledge may be held as an argument against the

scholar, it may also intercede for him and expiate his sins, for 'good deeds erase bad deeds' (11:114). Although it has not been specified how he should view the non-scholar, he should focus on his final end, so if he sees someone who seems more sinful than himself, he should ask himself, 'What if he is saved and I perish?' He will no longer see the other person as worse out of fear of his final end. Or he could tell himself, 'This person's goodness is hidden, and that may be better for him. I do not know – maybe he has a good trait that only Allah knows, and, because of this, Allah will have mercy upon him, forgive him, and end his life with the best of deeds. However, my goodness is publicly known, and that may be bad for me, for I cannot guarantee that my outward acts of devotion have not been infiltrated or tainted.'

A person will never go down the path of arrogance again if he allows himself to consider that he may be damned by Allah and doomed to eternal torment. In fact, when overcome by this fear, he will see everyone else as better than himself – and that is a virtue. Allah says:

And those who give what they give while their hearts tremble with awe. (23:60)

That is, they obey Allah while awed by the fear that their deeds may not be accepted.

Someone who is arrogant over his lineage should cure his heart by acknowledging two things. First, pride in the achievements of others is ignorance in and of itself; as these verses go:

When you brag that your forefathers were noble men,
You speak the truth – but vile is what they have begotten!

If someone who is proud of his lineage has such base

qualities in himself, what gives himself the right to absolve himself through their virtue? If the one he is so proud of being related to were alive, he would exclaim, 'The virtue is mine, and who are you but a worm created from my waste?'

Second, he should acknowledge his real lineage – his true forefather. His biological father was no more than an impure seed, and his true forefather was mere dust. Allah has described his pedigree:

Who perfected everything that He created and created man from clay. Then He made his progeny from an extract of a base fluid. (32:7-8)

The cure for arrogance over physical beauty or handsomeness is for the afflicted person to carefully consider his inner state – as intelligent people would – so he sees the despicable contaminants therein which sully his esteem of his own beauty. Indeed, every part of his body is a depository of filth: his bowels' excrement, his bladder's urine, his nose's mucous, his mouth's spittle, his ear's wax, his veins' blood, his skin's pus, and his armpits' reek. Once or twice a day, he cleanses himself of his own excrement with his own hand, and he goes again and again to the lavatory to empty his insides of things which he finds too disgusting to look at, let alone touch or smell. From the very beginning, he was created from disgusting impurities – semen and menstrual blood – one which came out the urine hole and lodged in a womb full of the other; then he came out a filthy orifice. If, for a single day in his life, he fails to wash himself, the stench of his filth will emanate from him; and, when he dies, he will be but a cadaver, fouler than them all.

It should suffice someone who is proud of his own strength to acknowledge the various ailments and

illnesses that overcome him. If a single nerve in his body is gripped by pain, he will become the weakest and most pathetic person. If a fly snatches something from him, he cannot retrieve it; and if a mosquito or ant creeps into his nose or ear, it kills him. If a thorn pierces his foot, it disables him; and a single day's fever saps him of so much strength that he takes days to recover. Plus, the strongest man can never be as strong as a donkey, an elephant, a camel, or a cow – so why be arrogant over something that animals have more of?

The most abject kind of arrogance is arrogance over privilege, wealth, and followers. Unlike arrogance over strength, appearance, and deeds, this type of arrogance is caused by external things. Fie upon this pride in feeling 'chosen' – which the Jews feel more entitled to. Fie upon this pride in wealth – which any thief can rob. Fie upon status bestowed by a ruler whose heart boils over more than a boiling pot: if the ruler changes his mind, the once proud man will fall into utter disgrace. Anyone who takes pride in something outside himself is clearly ignorant.

The cure for pride

Know that pride can never be cured until its roots are pulled out and its sprouts weeded from the heart, where they have been planted. This can be done by confessing that grandeur and arrogance belong only to the Lord. A proud person must confess to the reality of his own self and know that, in essence, he is lowlier and lesser than any other creature, and that it befits him to be humble, abased, and degraded. A single Qur'anic verse should suffice to open his eyes to this, as Allah says:

May man perish! How ungrateful he is! From what has He created him? From a drop of fluid – and then fashioned him. Then He made the way easy for him; then He made him die and buried him; and then, when He wished, He resurrected him. (80:17-22)

Yea, although He perfects him, gives Him control, and places everything in existence at His disposal, he takes the liberty of rebelling and forgets his origin. Allah, however, Allah subdues him throughout his life through fleeting illnesses, intense pain, various trials, and conflicting temperaments. The black and yellow bile, the phlegm, and the blood clash within him, and parts of his body destroy others – whether he likes it or not.

He is forced to hunger and thirst, sicken, and die – without any control. He can neither aid nor harm himself, nor bring himself good or ill. He may wish to learn something but remain ignorant of it. He may strain to remember something but forget it. Or, he may long to forget something and be mindless of it, but he cannot. He cannot even turn his heart away from what worries him; instead, he plunges into the valleys of misgivings and compulsive thoughts. He can control neither his heart nor his soul. He may crave something destructive to himself and abhor something that would save his life. He relishes foods that harm and spoil him, and recoils from medicines that aid and revive him. He can never guarantee – not even for a single moment of the day or night – that his hearing, sight, knowledge, or power will not be taken away. He can never be certain that his limbs will not be paralyzed, or his faculty of reasoning will not slip away. He can never be certain that his life will not be taken away, or that he will not lose everything that he is so attached to in this world. If left unharmed, he is poor and destitute, but if everything is wrested away from him, he

is but a slave who has no power over his own affairs or anyone else's. So who is more ignoble than him? If only he knew himself! Pride does not befit him – if only he knew. This is his real condition; let him ponder over that.

His ultimate end and destination is death, as the verse refers to: 'then He made him die and buried him' (80:21). He becomes a rotten, stinking corpse. His limbs and face decompose, his organs disintegrate, and his bones crumble into ash until he becomes worm food. Animals desert his corpse, and people are repelled by it. At this point, it would be best for him to return to his original condition – to become earth, which can be used to make bricks to build houses. How wonderful it would be if he could be left alone as dust. Alas, he will be brought back to life after lengthy tribulations to suffer harsh punishments. After his scattered limbs come together again, he will come out of his grave to face the horrors of the Day of Judgment. He will behold the resurrection already underway – the sky rent asunder, the earth transformed, the mountains moved, the stars blackened, the sun eclipsed, the world darkened, and the angels aggressive and severe. He will see the blazing fire, and the garden which all the criminals will gaze at in utter regret. He will see the scrolls laid out, with everything that he has said and done, with each and every thing – great or small – inscribed thereupon. This is what is meant by Allah's words: 'and then, when He wished, He resurrected him' (80:22). Wherefore the arrogance, when this will be his condition? Nay, this leaves him not a single moment of joy – let alone vanity or haughtiness.

The practical cure for this is to humble himself in all actions before Allah, the Exalted – and before all other

people by adopting the mannerisms of the humble. It is narrated that the Prophet (S) used to sit on the ground and eat, saying,

I am a slave, and I eat like a slave.⁴³ أنا عبد أكل كما يأكل العبد.

Salman was once asked, 'Why don't you dress well?' He replied, 'I am a slave. One day, when I am free, I will dress well.' He was referring to being free in the Hereafter. The humble person faces many tests through which the extent of his humility is known, so he must test himself to be certain of his humility. For he may think he is humble and free of arrogance – but when put to the test, his self reverts to its base nature, and he forgets his vow (to be humble). It is best and most praiseworthy to be humble without disgrace or loss of repute, for both extremes are reproachable, and Allah loves moderation – which is to give everything its due; and that is justice.

Self-admiration

Self-admiration is overestimating one's gifts and relying on them while forgetting to attribute them to the One who granted them. However, it is not self-admiration if someone fears these gifts may disappear or be destroyed or is pleased Allah has granted them. But if someone feels entitled to what Allah has given him – that he deserves it and cannot imagine that it would ever be taken away – then that is presumptuousness, as if he is putting his self over Allah. Similarly, if he gives something in charity while overestimating his deed and making the recipient feel obliged, then that is self-congratulation. If he tries to serve his own ends through it, imposes his own suggestions on how it should be used, or considers it far-

fetches that he would ever get a return for it, then that is also presumptuousness. Allah says disapprovingly:

And on the day of Hunayn, when your great number impressed you. (9:25)

And they thought their fortresses would protect them from Allah. But Allah came at them from whence they did not reckon. (59:2)

He also speaks of 'those whose endeavour goes awry in the life of this world, while they suppose they are doing good' (18:104). This too comes from feeling undue pride in one's achievements. People even take pride in mistakes just as they take pride in what they have done right. Allah says:

Is he, then, to whom the evil of his conduct is made alluring, so that he looks upon it as good [equal to one who is rightly guided]? (35:8)

The Prophet (S) said,

Three things which destroy are: greed, when it is obeyed; whims, when they are followed; and a man's admiration for himself.⁴⁴

ثلاث مهلكات، شح مطاع، وهوى متبع، وإعجاب المرء بنفسه.



When you see greed being obeyed, whims being followed, and every opinionated person admiring his own opinion, then focus on your own self.⁴⁵

إذا رأيت شحا مطاعا وهوى متبعًا، وإعجاب كل ذي رأى برأيه، فعليك بخافة نفسك.

Were it not for the fact that you sin, my greatest fear for you would be self-admiration. Self-admiration.⁴⁶

لو لم تذنبوا لخشيت عليكم ما هو أكبر من الذنوب، العُجب.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Allah, the Exalted, knows that sin is better for the believer than self-

admiration. Otherwise, no believer would ever be tried with sinning.⁴⁷

إن الله تعالى علم أن الذنب خير للمؤمن من العُجب، ولولا ذلك ما ابتلي مؤمناً بذنوب أبداً.



A man sins and regrets it, and then performs a good deed which pleases him and makes him slacken from his original state. His first state [feeling upset] was better than this [feeling pleased].⁴⁸

إن الرجل ليذنب الذنب فيندم عليه، ويعمل العمل فيسره ذلك، فيتراخي عن حاله تلك، فلئن يكون على حاله تلك، خير له مما دخل فيه.



A scholar came to a worshipper and asked, 'How is your prayer?'

The worshipper replied, 'How can someone like me be asked about prayer when I have been worshipping Allah for such a long time?'

The scholar asked, 'How do you weep?'

The worshipper replied, 'I weep until my tears flow.'

The scholar said, 'If you laughed while fearing [Allah], it would be better than weeping while being pleased with yourself. None of the deeds of the presumptuous ascend [to the heavens].'⁴⁹

أتى عالم عابداً فقال له: كيف صلاتك؟ فقال: مثلي يُسأل عن صلاته وأنا أعبد الله منذ كذا وكذا، قال: وكيف بكائك؟ قال: أبكي حتى تجري دموعي، فقال العالم: إن ضحكك وأنت خائف أفضل من بكائك وأنت مُدَلٍّ، إن المُدَلَّ لا يصعد من عمله شيء.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Two men entered the mosque – one, a devoted worshipper, and the other a sinner. When they left the mosque, the worshipper had become a sinner, and the sinner had become sincere. This is because the worshipper entered the mosque while he felt proud of his acts of worship, and his thoughts were preoccupied with that. However, the sinner was thinking remorsefully about his sins, and so he sought forgiveness from Allah from what he had done.⁵⁰

دخل رجلان المسجد، أحدهما عابد والآخر فاسق، فخرجا من المسجد والفاسق صديقاً والعابد فاسق، وذلك إنه دخل العابد المسجد مدلاً لعبادته، يدلُّ بها فتكون فكرته في ذلك وتكون فكرة الفاسق في الندم على فسقه ويستغفر الله مما صنع من الذنب.

The Prophet (S) said,

Moses told Iblis [Satan], "Tell me of a sin which will give you mastery over the son of Adam, if he commits it."

He replied, 'When he feels pleased with himself and overestimates his deeds while underestimating his sins.'⁵¹

قال موسى لإبليس: أخبرني بالذنب الذي إذا أذنبه ابن آدم استحوذت عليه، فقال: إذا أعجبته نفسه واستكثر عمله وصغر في عينه ذنبه.



Allah, the Exalted, said to David: 'Give glad tidings to the sinners, and warn the devotees.'

David asked, 'How can I give glad tidings to the sinners and warn the devotees?'

He replied: 'O David, give glad tidings to the sinners that I have accepted their repentance and wiped away their sin. Warn the devotees not to feel pleased with their own actions, for when a servant [of Allah] is taken to account for his deeds, he perishes.'⁵²

قال الله تعالى لداود: بشر المذنبين وأنذر الصديقين. قال داود: كيف أبشر المذنبين وأنذر الصديقين؟ قال: يا داود بشر المذنبين أني أقبل التوبة وأعفو عن الذنب وأنذر الصديقين أن لا يعجبوا بأعمالهم، فإنه ليس عبد أنصبه للحساب إلا هلك.

Imam al-Kazim (A) was asked about self-admiration which nullifies deeds. He replied,

Self-admiration has various levels. One is when the servant [of Allah] is pleased with his own wrongdoing and sees it as good; he admires himself and reckons he has done a good act. Another is when a servant believes in Allah and thinks that Allah should be indebted to him for that, whereas he should be indebted to Allah for that.⁵³

العُجْبُ درجات، منها أن يُزَيَّنَ للعبد سوء عمله، فرآه حسناً، فيعجبه، ويحسب أنه يحسن صنعاً، ومنها أن يؤمن العبد بربه فيمنّ على الله، والله عليه فيه المنّ.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

Self-admiration encompasses all those aspects of self-importance found in those who feel pleased with their own actions, little knowing what their end will be. Whoever feels pleased with himself and his actions has strayed off the path of right guidance and has claimed what is not his. Anyone who claims something to which he has no right is a liar, even if he conceals his claim for a long time. The first thing that will be done to a self-admiring person is that he will be stripped of whatever is making him pleased with himself so he recognises that he is powerless and destitute, and so he can bear witness against himself; that will be firmer proof against him, as with Iblis.

Self-admiration is a plant whose seed is disbelief, whose soil is hypocrisy, and whose water is transgression. Its branches are ignorance, its leaves are misguidance, and its fruits are damnation and eternal punishment in the Fire. Whoever chooses self-admiration has indeed sowed disbelief and cultivated hypocrisy. He will inevitably bear its fruit and he will end up in the Fire.⁵⁴

العجب كل العجب ممن يعجب بعمله وهو لا يدري بما يُخْتَمُ له، فمن اعجب بنفسه وفعله، فقد ضل عن نهج الرشاد وادعى ما ليس له، والمدعي من غير حق كاذب وإن خفي دعواه وطال دهره فإنه أول ما يفعل بالمعجب نزع ما اعجب به ليعلم أنه عاجز فقير، ويشهد على نفسه لتكون الحجة عليه أوكد كما فعل ابليس. والعجب نبات حبها الكفر، وارضها النفاق وماؤها البغي، واغصانها الجهل، وورقها الضلالة، وثمرها اللعنة والخلود في النار.

The consequences of self-admiration

Know that self-admiration has many evil consequences. It causes pride; in fact, it is one of the primary causes of pride (as listed previously). It inspires a person to forget his sins, or to minimize the ones that he does remember.

He makes light of his sins instead of making much of them, and, rather than trying to pinpoint or redress them, he assumes they will be forgiven. However, he makes much of his worship – congratulating himself on it, presuming that Allah is in his debt, and forgetting that Allah was the one who blessed him with the ability to perform this worship in the first place. A person who is self-satisfied with his worship is blind to the consequences. And when a person does not look into the evil consequences of his deeds, his efforts largely go to waste; for if outer acts of devotion are not performed sincerely or purified of defects, they are rarely of any benefit.

Only those who are overcome with apprehension and fear – not self-admiration – examine their deeds this way. A self-important person deludes himself and tries to delude his Lord. Feeling safe from Allah's plan and punishment, he thinks he holds a great place with Allah, and that he deserves a favour and a return from Allah for his deeds – which were one of His gifts and blessings upon him in the first place. His self-admiration compels him to praise, glorify, and justify himself. Feeling pleased with his own opinion, work, or rationale prevents him from benefitting from anyone else – by seeking counsel and asking questions – for he relies solely on himself and his own opinion, and disdains asking anyone else who is more knowledgeable.

It may be that the opinion that he is so pleased with is wrong, but he is happy because it is a product of his own thoughts, and would not be happy if it came from others. He persists in it and does not listen to anyone's advice or warnings. Instead, he looks down on everyone else as

ignorant. If only he questioned his self and did not put his trust in his own opinion. If only he sought enlightenment from the Qur'an and help from religious scholars. If only he studied diligently and questioned the insightful – these things would certainly deliver him to the truth.

These (and their like) are some of the evil consequences of self-admiration; this is why it is a 'destroyer'. One of its severest consequences is that it leads a person to slacken his striving on the assumption that he has already attained salvation and is in no need of being saved. Without a shadow of doubt, this is manifest perdition.

Self-admiration and arrogance

Know that people feel self-satisfied for the same reasons that they feel arrogant, and so the cure for self-admiration is the same as the cure for arrogance (which we have outlined previously). He may even be pleased with himself over things that he has no right to be arrogant over, such as a mistaken opinion which appeals to him because he is ignorant. The Prophet (S) told us that this would overcome the later generations of this community and was why earlier communities fragmented, each sect enamoured with its own opinion, and 'each group rejoicing in what it has' (30:32). Those who are prone to religious innovations (*ahl al-bid'ah*) and misguidance persist in their error because they admire their own views. This is what their fancy and delusion drives them to – while they even believe it is the truth.

Treating self-admiration is more difficult than treating other ills because a person with an erroneous view errs out of ignorance; were he to know his error, he would

abandon it. However, he cannot treat an ailment that he refuses to acknowledge. While an insightful person can explain an ignorant mistake to the person who made it, a self-admiring person who admires his errors and his ignorance will not listen to an insightful person and will instead mistrust him. Allah has tried him with a peril that he perceives as a blessing; how can he ever escape from something which he thinks is a saving grace?

The sole treatment is for him to continuously mistrust his own opinion and not to allow himself to be deluded by it unless it is corroborated with clear-cut evidence from the honourable Book of Allah; the Sunnah of His Messenger; or a correct, logical proof that fulfils the necessary criteria. People will only recognise the reasoning behind the divine law and the criteria and pitfalls inherent in logical proofs through unyielding devotion, firm intellect, effort and diligence in learning and applying the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (S), sitting with true scholars, and studying these sciences – for their entire life. Nevertheless, there is no guarantee that they will not err in some matters.

When someone is not at liberty to immerse himself in the quest for knowledge for his entire life, the correct way to proceed is for him to refrain from delving into, heeding, and listening to various religious ideologies (*madhahib*). Instead, he must believe that Allah is One and has no partner, that there is nothing like Him, that He is all-Hearing and all-Seeing, and that His Messenger was truthful in what he conveyed to us. He must follow the guided Imams from the Holy Household, peace and blessings be upon all of them. He must believe in all of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, without investigation and

scrutiny; engage himself in piety; refrain from acts of disobedience to Allah; be compassionate to other Muslims; and perform other acts pleasing to Allah.

Treating the cause

Since all ailments are treated by countering their underlying causes with their opposites, and since the cause of self-admiration is pure ignorance, then the treatment for it is its opposite – awareness to counter that ignorance.

Take someone who is pleased with himself for an act which is under his own control (such as an act of worship). This kind of self-admiration is more common than self-admiration over beauty, strength, or lineage – none of which are under a person's control.

A person marvels at his own piety, God-consciousness, worship, and devotion either because (a) he is only a conduit for these qualities which flow through him, or (b) he enacts these qualities through his own power and volition.

If it is the first case, this is ignorance because a conduit has no control over what flows through it. He came to be in that situation because of another factor that he had no control over. How can he be pleased with himself about something that he did not actually do?

If it is the second case, the person must reflect over his strength, will, bodily limbs, and everything else that enabled him to perform these deeds. Where did they come from? Once he acknowledges that these are a blessing from Allah which he has no right or claim to, then instead of admiring himself, he will admire Allah's generosity and grace, for Allah has showered him with gifts that he did

not deserve and preferred him over others, even though he has no special merit or right.

If he says, 'He granted me these things in return for my love for Him', then he should be asked, 'Who made this love in your heart?' He will reply, 'He did.'

He should be told that love and worship are both divine gifts which He took the initiative in giving you without you deserving them, for you have no influence over or attachment to Him. You must direct your admiration solely at His generosity for blessing you with your existence, qualities, actions, and the fruits of your actions.

It is meaningless for a worshipper to feel pleased with his worship, for a scholar to feel pleased with his knowledge, for a handsome person to feel pleased with his beauty, or for a rich person to feel pleased with his wealth, because these are all from the grace of Allah. The recipient is but a depository for the outpouring of divine gifts. Being a depository is also due to His generosity and favour, for He has created you and your limbs with their strength, vitality, and power. He has created the intellect, knowledge, and will for you; and even if you wanted to remove one of these things from yourself, you could not.

Then he created your movements to correspond to your limbs – as His invention; you had no input in His creativity. He created them all in perfect order and did not create any movement without first creating strength in that body part. Nor did he place willpower in your heart without first placing knowledge of the desired object within; nor did He create knowledge without creating the heart to contain knowledge; and thus, step by step, He created one thing after another.

He made you imagine that you gained your own knowledge; but you are the one who has erred. Allah set the wheels in motion, removed the obstacles, and paved the way; you did not do any of that.

What is truly amazing is that you are amazed at yourself, not at the One who everything goes back to. It is a wonder that you do not admire His generosity and grace in choosing you over all the other wrongdoers among His servants. He gave them the means to indulge in their desires and pleasures while He hid them from you. He kept the incentives and motivation for doing good away from them while He gave them to you. He made good easy for you and evil easy for them. He did that for you, not for them – but not because you have any particular merit, or because they have any particular crime.

Our Prophet (S) related that Job (Ayyub) said to Allah:

‘My God, you have afflicted me with tribulation. But no matter what happens to me, I will prefer Your will over my own.’

Thousands of voices called to him from the clouds: ‘O Job! How did that come to you?’

Taking some earth and placing it on his head [in humility], he replied, ‘From You, O Lord.’ Thus he came back from his state of forgetfulness of Allah.

This is why Allah revealed: ‘Were it not for Allah’s grace and mercy upon you, none of you would have been purified’ (24:21).⁵⁵

قال: إلهي إنك ابتليتني بهذا البلاء وما ورد علي أمر إلا آثرت هواك على هواي فتودني من عمامة بعشرة آلاف صوت: يا أيوب آلي لك؟ قال: فأخذ رماداً فوضعه على رأسه فقال: منك يا رب فرجع من نسيانه إلى إضافة ذلك إلى الله تعالى.

ولهذا قال الله تعالى: ﴿وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ مَا زَكَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا﴾.

The Prophet (S) said,

'No one will attain salvation on account of his deeds.'

His companions asked, 'Not even you?'

He replied, 'Not even me, unless Allah encompasses me with his mercy.'⁵⁶

قال (ص): ما منكم من أحد ينجي عمله. قالوا: ولا أنت يا رسول الله؟ قال: ولا أنا إلا أن يتغمدني الله برحمته.

In conclusion, this is the decisive treatment for removing self-admiration from the heart. When these [correct feelings] overpower the heart, the heart then becomes preoccupied with the fear of losing these blessings that were once the source of self-admiration.

Notes

- ¹ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 275.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 296.
- ⁴ Sijjin: proper name given in the Qur'an to a written record of the evildoers' deeds.
- ⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 295.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 297.
- ⁷ Ibid., p. 295.
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 296.
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 295; *Tafsir al-'Ayashi* (n.l.: n.d.), vol. 2, p. 353.
- ¹⁰ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 293.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Ibid., p. 295.
- ¹³ Ibid., p. 296.
- ¹⁴ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 189; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 287.
- ¹⁵ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 288.
- ¹⁶ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 297.
- ¹⁷ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 32.
- ¹⁸ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 123.
- ¹⁹ al-Tabarsi, *Makarim al-Akhlaq*, p. 34.

- ²⁰ al-Saduq, *al-Khisal*, vol. 2, p. 612.
- ²¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 6, p. 441.
- ²² al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 310; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 314; Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 198.
- ²³ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 2, p. 317.
- ²⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 309.
- ²⁵ Ibid., p. 310.
- ²⁶ Ibid., p. 311.
- ²⁷ Ibid., p. 312.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 310; al-Barqi, *al-Mahasin*, vol. 1, p. 123.
- ²⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 311; al-Barqi, *al-Mahasin*, vol. 1, p. 123.
- ³⁰ al-Barqi, *al-Mahasin*, vol. 1, p. 123; al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 122.
- ³¹ al-Tusi, *al-Amali*, p. 56.
- ³² Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 201; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 319.
- ³³ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 201; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 219.
- ³⁴ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 201; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 2, p. 319.
- ³⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 123.
- ³⁶ Ibid., p. 124.
- ³⁷ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 82.
- ³⁸ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 339.
- ³⁹ Holy Qur'an 62:5: 'The parable of those who were charged with the Torah, then failed to carry it, is that of a donkey carrying books.'
- ⁴⁰ Holy Qur'an 7:176: 'So his parable is that of a dog: if you make for it, it lolls out its tongue, and if you let it alone, it lolls out its tongue.'
- ⁴¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 47.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 336.
- ⁴⁴ al-'Awali, vol. 1, p. 273; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 344.
- ⁴⁵ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 344.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 345.
- ⁴⁷ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 313; al-Mufid, al-Shaykh Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Nu'man, *al-Ikhtisas* (Beirut: Dar al-Mufid li al-Taba'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawdi', 1993), p. 242.
- ⁴⁸ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 313.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 313.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 314.

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⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 313.

⁵⁴ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 81.

⁵⁵ A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary texts of *hadith*. However, the narration has also been mentioned by al-Naraqī in *Jami' al-Sa'adat*.

⁵⁶ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 349.

THIRD TREATISE

**In Condemnation of this World and
its Guiles**

In it are five books...

BOOK 1

❖ Understanding this World ❖
& the Hereafter

Introduction

Your worldly life and your Hereafter are two expressions of two of your heart's states. The immediate, lower of these two is called 'the world' [*dunya*, etymologically related to words meaning 'low, vile'], which includes everything before death. The imminent, postponed life is called the 'Hereafter', and it includes everything after death. All that you experience a share of, or a fortune in, and all your ambitions, desires, and enjoyment in the present, before death, is worldly with respect to you. However, not everything that you incline to or which has gain and fortune in it is blameworthy.

This is because anything accompanying you in this world whose fruits remain with you after death – such as beneficial knowledge and righteous deeds – really belong to the Hereafter, but they are categorized as worldly because of their immediateness. A scholar, for instance, may find such solace in knowledge that he takes more pleasure in it than anything else, and for its sake he abandons sleep, relations with women, and food – although he enjoys them – because his desire for knowledge is stronger than all these other desires. This

has become his share of the world. However, were we to discuss the world in terms of its reproachable nature, we would never include this as part of it and instead would say it relates to the Hereafter.

Similarly, a worshipper may delight so much in the intimacy of his worship that being prevented from worshipping would be the greatest punishment for him, to the point where some people say, 'I only fear death because it will stop me from saying the night prayer.'

One of the many righteous deeds which are considered to be part of the Hereafter is earning a livelihood. The Prophet (S) said,

Worship has seventy parts, the best of which is seeking a lawful (*halal*) livelihood.¹

العبادة سبعون جزءاً أفضلها طلب الحلال.



Cursed is he who throws his burden onto others.²

ملعون من ألقى كَلَّهُ على الناس.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

Allah revealed to David, 'You would be the best servant – except that you live off the public treasury and do not work with your own hands.'

David wept for forty mornings until Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, sent His inspiration to iron: 'Be pliable for My servant David.'

So Allah softened iron for him. Every day, he fashioned a coat of mail and sold it for a thousand dirhams. He made three hundred and sixty coats and sold them for three hundred and sixty thousand dirhams, and became independent of the public treasury.³

أوحى الله تعالى إلى داود أنك نعم العبد لولا أنك تأكل من بيت المال ولا تعمل بيدك شيئاً قال:

فيكي داود أربعين صباحاً، فأوحى الله عز وجل إلى الحديد أن لنْ لعبيدي داود، فالان الله له الحديد وكان يعمل كل يوم درعاً فيبيعها بألف درهم، فعمل ثلاث مئة وستين درعاً فباعها بثلاثمائة وستين ألفاً واستغنى عن بيت المال.

It is narrated that Imam al-Sajjad (A) said,

This world is actually two worlds: a world for maturing in, and the blameworthy worldliness.⁴

الدنيا دنيا، دنيا بلاغ ودنيا ملعونة.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

When someone seeks his livelihood in this world, trying to be independent of other people, and striving to provide for his family and help his neighbour, he will meet Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, with a face glowing like a full moon.⁵

من طلب الرزق في الدنيا استعفافاً عن الناس وسعيّاً على أهله وتعطفاً على جاره، لقي الله عز وجل ووجهه مثل القمر في ليلة البدر.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

He who toils to provide for his family is like someone who fights in the way of Allah.⁶

الكأد على عياله كالجاهد في سبيل الله.

About a man who says, 'I will sit in my house and pray, fast, and worship my Lord, and my sustenance will come to me', he said,

This is one of three types of people whose prayers will not be answered.⁷

قال في رجل: قال: لأقعدن في بيتي ولأصليّن ولأصومنّ ولأعبدنّ ربي فأما رزقي فسيأتي، قال: هذا أحد الثلاثة الذين لا يستجاب لهم دعوة.

He also said,

Allah loves it when people travel in search of their livelihood.⁸

إن الله يحب الإغتراب في طلب الرزق.

Once, the Imam was asked,

'By Allah, we seek [the riches] of this world and like them to be given to us.'

The Imam said, 'What do you like to do with it'

The man replied, 'I spend it on myself and my family; I maintain family ties with it; I give it in charity; and I go for hajj and 'umrah.'

The Imam said, 'That is not seeking the world; that is seeking the Hereafter.'⁹

وقال له رجل: والله إنا نطلب الدنيا ونحب أن نؤتاها، فقال (ع): تحب أن تصنع بها ماذا؟ قال: أعود بها على نفسي وعيالي وأصل بها وأتصدق بها وأحج وأعتمر، فقال: هذا ليس طلب الدنيا هذا طلب الآخرة.

He also said,

Neither the one who abandons his worldly life for his Hereafter, nor the one who abandons his Hereafter for his worldly life, is one of us.¹⁰

ليس منا من ترك دنياه لآخرفته ولا آخرفته لدنياه.



Do not be lazy when seeking your livelihood, for our fathers used to run in search of it.¹¹

لا تكسلوا لطلب معاشكم فإن آباءنا كانوا يركضون فيها ويطلبونها.

'Ali ibn Abu Hamzah relates:

I saw Abu al-Hasan [al-Kazim] (A) working the land so hard that his feet were soaked with sweat. So I asked him, 'May I be your ransom, where are the men?'

He replied, 'O 'Ali, someone who is better than me and my father also worked his land with a shovel.'

I asked, 'Who?'

He replied, 'The Messenger of Allah (S), the Commander of the Faithful (A), and my forefathers (A) all used to work with their hands. This is the work of the prophets, the messengers, their successors, and the righteous.'¹²

رَأَيْتُ أَبَا الْحَسَنِ (ع) يَعْمَلُ فِي أَرْضٍ وَقَدْ اسْتَنْقَعَتْ قَدَمَاهُ مِنَ الْعَرَقِ فَقُلْتُ لَهُ : جَعَلْتَ فِدَاكَ، أَيْنَ الرِّجَالُ؟ فَقَالَ يَا عَلِيٌّ قَدْ عَمِلَ بِالْبَيْلِ مَنْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِنِّي فِي أَرْضِهِ وَمَنْ أَنِي، فَقُلْتُ: وَمَنْ هُوَ؟ فَقَالَ: رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) وَأَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (ع) وَأَبَائِي كُلُّهُمْ كَانُوا قَدْ عَمَلُوا بِأَيْدِيهِمْ، وَهُوَ مِنْ عَمَلِ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ وَالْأَوْصِيَاءِ الصَّالِحِينَ.

What remains after death?

Know that only three characteristics remain with a person after death: purity of the heart (by this, I mean how much it has been cleansed of worldly pollutants), intimacy with Allah through remembering Him, and love of Allah. The heart can only be purified and cleansed through restraint from worldly desires. Intimacy can only be attained through abundant remembrance of Allah. Love of Allah can only be attained through inner knowledge of Him – which, in turn, can only be attained through constant reflection. These three characteristics will be his saving graces after death; they will be the good that remains.

It is narrated (in two separate narrations) that a man's deeds will defend him. If punishment comes at him from his legs, his standing in night prayer will come to his defence. If it comes at him from his hands, the charity that he gave [with his hands] will come to his defence.

Intimacy and love deliver the servant into delight when he meets and beholds Allah; after he dies, these two happinesses forge ahead of him until he enters Paradise. His grave becomes 'one of the gardens of Paradise'¹³ –

and rightly so, for he had only one Beloved. Many obstacles tried to prevent him from continuously remembering Allah and contemplating His beauty, but now these obstacles have been lifted, and he has been freed from that prison. Nothing now separates him from his Beloved, so he approaches Him, happy, unopposed, secure that he will never be separated from Him.

But how could someone who was in love with this world face anything but torment after death? For he had no love but this world. He usurped it,¹⁴ and so it came between him and his Lord, blocking any paths that might lead back to Him. Death is not mere annihilation. Instead, it separates people from the worldly life that they love and presents them before Allah, the Exalted.

A person who treads the path to the Hereafter, therefore, will diligently pursue the means to these three saving graces – namely, remembrance of Allah, reflection, and action. These wean him from worldly desires. They render its pleasures loathsome to him and cut him off from them. All of this, however, can only be done when the body is healthy; and the body will only be healthy when it has its necessary nutrition, clothing, and housing; everyone needs certain things.

If a servant [of Allah] takes what he needs from this world to achieve these three things for the sake of the Hereafter, he will not be considered a 'son of this world'. The world will in fact be a field in which he sows for the Hereafter. If, however, he takes from this world to live luxuriously and as his own deserved share, he will be considered a 'son of this world' and as one of those who desires its fortunes. The desire for worldly fortunes can be categorised into two types: (a) that which exposes people

to Allah's punishment in the Hereafter, and is forbidden (*haram*), and (b) that which prevents people from reaching higher levels and leads to a lengthy reckoning, and is permissible (*halal*).

A person with insight understands that prolonged standing in the arena of the Judgment Day and waiting to account for one's life will itself be torment, for whoever raises objections to his account will be chastised. This is why the Messenger of Allah (S) said,

The permissible (*halal*) leads to reckoning, and the impermissible (*haram*) leads to chastisement.¹⁵

في حلالها حساب وفي حرامها عذاب.

Nay, were there no accounting, the regret and sense of loss that overcomes the heart at missing out on the higher levels of Paradise for the sake of a few base, lowly, ephemeral fortunes would be torment in and of itself.

Compare this to your worldly life. When you see, right in front of you, your friends prospering in worldly ways that you are not, your heart is cut to pieces because you are missing out on what they are enjoying – even though you know these are but fleeting, temporary pleasures – contaminated, not pure. How will you feel, then, when you lose out on pleasures which are indescribably great and unlimited by time and space? The more someone understands this – the stronger and firmer his understanding – the warier he will be of the luxuries of this world.

Jesus (A) even used to sleep with his head on a rock. Then, when Iblis appeared before him, he cast it away, saying, 'I was desiring this world.'

Solomon (A) used to feed the people of his kingdom the

most delicious foods while he himself ate barley bread. He had control over his self and tested it severely this way, for one of the hardest things is to abstain from eating delicious food when it is right in front of you.

This is why Allah kept the world from our Prophet (S), and he used to go hungry for days. This is why He tried and tested the prophets, saints, and those with the greatest likeness to them. This was how He looked kindly upon them so that He might lavish an abundant share upon them in the Hereafter, just as a kindly father does not let his son eat luscious fruits and instead forces him to undergo cupping and blood-letting – out of love and concern, not miserliness. You already have realised the truth: whatever is not for Allah is worldly, and whatever is for Allah is not worldly.¹⁶

Objects of worldly desire

It is clear from what we have said that this world is your self's temporal lot which is independent of the Hereafter. This is also called 'whim' (*hawa*), as Allah has referred to it:

But as for he who is awed to stand before his Lord and forbids his soul from following whims, his refuge will indeed be Paradise. (79:40-41)

Whims operate in five spheres, as Allah says:

Know that the life of this world is (a) play, (b) diversion, (c) glitter, (d) mutual vainglory among you, and (e) covetousness for wealth and children. (57:20, enumerations added by translator)

Furthermore, there are seven objects of desire within these five spheres, as Allah says:

Delightful to humankind has been made the love of desire for (a) women and (b) children, heaped up piles of (c) gold and (d) silver, (e)

fine horses, (f) livestock, and (g) farmland. These are the wares of the life of this world, but Allah – with Him is a good destination. (3:14, enumerations added by translator)

These are the chattels of this world which the servant [of Allah] is attached to on two levels. The first level is in his heart – in his love for them and his love for his share of them. In his preoccupation with them, his heart becomes enslaved to them like an infatuated lover. Through this attachment, all the attributes of the heart related to worldly matters surface, such as arrogance, deception, jealousy, showing off, vying for repute, suspicion, flattery, love of praise, love of hoarding, and boasting. This is 'inner worldliness'.

The second level is in the relationship between the body and these above-mentioned chattels themselves. This is his preoccupation with procuring these material things and ameliorating his (and others') lot in life; this goes back to the vocations and crafts that people occupy themselves with, to the extent that they forget their own selves, their possessions, and their final destination. If they understood why they need these things and restricted themselves to fulfilling that need, they would not drown in their worldly preoccupations. They drown because of their ignorance of the nature and purpose of this world, and of gaining their share of these things. Their pursuits accumulate, each leading endlessly and limitlessly to another, until their frantic preoccupation causes them to stray and forget the purpose of life. All that is mentioned in condemnation of the worldly life relates to this.

Notes

- ¹ al-Harrani, *Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, p. 32.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ al-Saduq, *Man La Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, vol. 3, p. 98; al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 5, p. 74.
- ⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 317.
- ⁵ Ibid., vol. 5, p. 78.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 88.
- ⁷ Ibid., p. 77.
- ⁸ al-Saduq, *Man La Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, vol. 3, p. 95.
- ⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 5, p. 72.
- ¹⁰ al-Saduq, *Man La Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, vol. 3, p. 94.
- ¹¹ Ibid., vol. 3, p. 95.
- ¹² al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 5, p. 75.
- ¹³ A well-known narration from the Prophet Muhammad (S). See Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 6, p. 137.
- ¹⁴ An alternate manuscript reads: 'He grew angry with it (*ghadiba*)' instead of 'He usurped it (*ghasaba*)'.
- ¹⁵ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 152; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 207.
- ¹⁶ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 153-154.

❖ In Condemnation of this World ❖

Introduction

Know that this world is an enemy of Allah, an enemy of Allah's friends (*awliya'*), and an enemy of Allah's enemies.

It is an enemy of Allah because it blocks the path for His servants. For that reason, Allah has not once looked upon it favourably since He created it.

It is an enemy of the friends of Allah because it adorns itself for them and overshadows them with its splendour and radiance so they must swallow the bitterness of steadfastly combating it.

It is an enemy of Allah's enemies because it gradually entices them with its cunning and ensnares them in its net until they depend on it. Then it betrays them in their time of greatest need, and they recoil from it with deep, burning regret for the eternal happiness that it has eternally seized. They bewail its loss and seek Allah's assistance in the face of its tricks, but they find no aid. Instead, they are told:

Begone, and do not speak to Me! (23:108)

They are the ones who sold the Hereafter for the life of this world, so their punishment shall not be lightened, nor will they be helped. (2:86)

Many Qur'anic verses condemn the world – indeed, most of the Qur'an reproaches this world, cautions people

against it, and calls them towards the Hereafter. This was the entire point of sending divine messengers; they were not sent for any other reason. There is no need to quote more Qur'anic verses to prove this point, for it is very clear. Instead, we can mention a few of the countless narrations on this subject.

It is narrated that Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

The Prophet (S) left, feeling sad, when an angel came to him with the keys to the treasures of the earth.

The angel said, 'O Muhammad, these are the keys to the treasures of the earth. Your Lord tells you: "Open it and take whatever you like, for it will not take away anything from Me."'

The Prophet (S) replied, 'The world is a home for those who have no other home, and only a person with no intellect would hoard it.'

So the angel said, 'Truly, by the One appointed you as a prophet, I heard an angel in the fourth heaven utter the same words when I was given these keys.'¹

خرج النبي (ص) وهو محزون فأتاه ملك ومعه مفاتيح خزائن الأرض، فقال: يا محمد هذه مفاتيح خزائن الأرض يقول لك ربك: افتح وخذ منها ما شئت من غير أن ينقص شيئا عندي، فقال رسول الله (ص): الدنيا دار من لا دار له ولها يجمع من لا عقل له، فقال الملك: والذي بعثك بالحق نبيا لقد سمعت هذا الكلام من ملك يقوله في السماء الرابعة، حين أعطيت المفاتيح.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) narrated,

The Prophet (S) once passed by a dead goat, thrown on a heap of rubbish. He asked his companions, 'How much is this worth?'

They replied, 'If it were alive, it might not even be worth a dirham.'

So the Prophet (S) said, 'By the One who holds my soul in His hand, this world is worth less to Allah than this goat is to its owner.'²

مرّ رسول الله (ص) بجدي أسك [هكذا في الاصل] ملقى في مزبلة ميتاً، فقال لأصحابه: كم يساوي هذا؟ فقالوا: لعله لو كان حياً لم يساو قيمته درهماً، فقال النبي (ص): والذي نفسي بيده،

الدنيا أهون على الله من هذا الجدي على أهله.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) narrated that the Prophet (S) said,

Seeking this world harms the Hereafter, and seeking the Hereafter harms this world. So endure worldly loss instead, for it is more deserving of being lost.³

إنَّ في طلب الدنيا إضراراً بالأخيرة، وفي طلب الأخيرة إضراراً بالدنيا، فاضربوا بالدنيا فإنها أحق بالإضرار.



What do I have to do with the world? In this world, I am like a horseman who, on a summer day, rests beneath a tree that has been placed for him [by Allah] and then abandons it.⁴

مالي وللدنيا، إنما مثلي ومثلها كمثل راكب رفعت له شجرة في يوم صائف فقال تحتها ثم راح وتركها.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) related,

The Commander of the Faithful (A) wrote to one of his companions and exhorted him, 'I advise you – and myself – to be conscious of Allah, who may not be disobeyed. Hope can be placed in none but Him, and it is not possible to be self-sufficient except through Him.

'Whoever is conscious of Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, will be strong and satisfied, and his intellect will rise above that of worldly people. His body will dwell among the people of the world, but his heart and mind will look to the Hereafter, such that light from his heart will efface the worldly enticements that his eyes see. He will see forbidden things as filthy and avoid everything doubtful. Even permissible, pure things will bother him – except for what he must consume – and he will limit himself to the minimum he needs to strengthen and clothe himself; he will choose the coarsest and plainest clothing.

'He will not feel that he is guaranteed to receive his bare necessities, nor will he place his hopes in them. Instead, he will rely upon and hope in the Creator of all things. He strives, toils, and works with his

body until his ribs protrude and his eyes become hollow. Allah compensates him for this with bodily strength, intellectual power, and much more reserved for him in the Hereafter.

'So reject this world. Truly, love of this world blinds, deafens, silences, and humiliates whoever is enslaved in it. Seize what is left of your life. Do not count on tomorrow or the day after, for many before you perished because they relied on false hopes and procrastinated until the command of Allah suddenly overtook them in the midst of their negligence. Their corpses were moved to their dark, narrow graves, and their children and families bade them farewell.

'So dedicate yourself to Allah with a penitent heart that rejects this world, with a determination that cannot be hindered or defeated. May Allah assist us – and you – to obey Him; and may He bless us – and you – with His good pleasure.'⁵

كتب أمير المؤمنين إلى بعض أصحابه يعظه: أوصيك ونفسي بتقوى الله من لا تحل معصيته، ولا يرجي غيره، ولا الغنى إلا به، فإن من اتقى الله عز وجل قوى وشيع وروي ورفع عقله عن أهل الدنيا، فبدنه مع أهل الدنيا، وقلبه وعقله مع أهل الآخرة، فأطفأ بضوء قلبه ما أبصرت عيناه من حب الدنيا، فقتل حرامها وجانب شبهاتها، وأضر والله بالخلل الصافي، إلا ما لا بد له من كسرة يشد بها صلبه، وثوب يوارى عورته، من أغلظ ما يجد وأخشنه، ولم يكن له فيما لا بد له منه ثقة ولا رجاء، ف وقعت ثقته ورجاؤه على خالق الأشياء، فجد واجتهد وأتعب بدنه حتى بدت الاضلاع وغارت العينان، فأبدل الله له من ذلك قوة في بدنه، وشدة في عقله وما دُخِرَ له في الآخرة أكثر. فافرض الدنيا، فإن حب الدنيا يعمي ويصم ويكلم ويدل الرقاب، فتدارك ما بقي من عمره ولا تقل غدا وبعد غد، وإنما هلك من كان قبلك بإقامتهم على الأمان والتسوية، حتى أتاهم أمر الله بغتة وهم غافلون، فنقلوا على أعوادهم إلى قبورهم المظلمة الضيقة وقد أسلمهم الأولاد والاهلون، فانقطع إلى الله بقلب منيب، من رفض الدنيا وعزم، ليس فيه انكسار ولا انحزال، أعاننا الله وإياك على طاعته ووقفنا الله وإياك لمرضاته.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) also said when describing the world,

How should I describe something whose beginning is pain and whose end is destruction? [People are] taken to account for its permissible

things and punished for its forbidden things. In it, the wealthy are tested, and the poor are miserable. When someone chases it, he loses it; but when someone keeps away from it, it comes to him. It grants insight to whoever sees through it but blinds whoever sets his sights on it.⁶

ما أصف من دار أولها عناء وآخرها فناء، في حلالها حساب وفي حرامها عقاب، ومن استغنى فيها فتن ومن افتقر فيها حزن ومن ساعاها فاتته، ومن قعد عنها أته، ومن أبصر بها بصرتة، ومن أبصر إليها أعمته.

Imam al-Baqir (A) narrated that 'Ali ibn al-Husayn [his father] (A) said,

The world leaves us behind while the Hereafter approaches; each of them has its own 'children'. So be 'children of the Hereafter', not 'children of the world'. Be among those who abstain from this world and yearn for the next. Truly, those who abstain from this world take the earth as their carpet, the dust as their pillow, and water as their perfume; they nibble at it sparingly. Truly, whoever yearns for Paradise is patient in the face of desire; whoever fears the Fire avoids the forbidden; and whoever abstains from this world finds its tribulations easier to bear.

Allah has servants who are like those who see people dwelling eternally in Paradise and punished eternally in the Fire for their evil ways. Their hearts are heavy, their selves are chaste, and their requirements are few. After a few days of patience, they attain everlasting comfort. At night, they stand [straight] in prayer. Their tears roll down their cheeks while they flee to their Lord, begging Him to free them from the Fire. During the day, they are wise, knowledgeable, virtuous, and God-conscious. They are like arrows carved by fear in their worship. People look at them and say they are ill or afflicted. They are not ill, but they have been affected, affected by something enormous – the thought of the Fire and everything in it.⁷

إن الدنيا قد ارتحلت مدبرة والأخرة قد ارتحلت مقبلة، ولكل واحد منهما بنون فكونوا من أبناء الاخرة، ولا تكونوا من أبناء الدنيا، ألا وكونوا من الزاهدين في الدنيا الراغبين في الاخرة، ألا إن الزاهدين في الدنيا اتخذوا الأرض بساطاً، والتراب فراشاً والماء طيباً وقرضوا من الدنيا تقريضاً، ألا

ومن اشتاق إلى الجنة سلا عن الشهوات ومن أشفق من النار رجع عن الحرمات ومن زهد في الدنيا هانت عليه المصائب.

ألا أن الله عبادا كمن رأى أهل الجنة في الجنة مخلدين وكم من رأى أهل النار في النار معذبين، شرورهم مأمونة، وقلوبهم محزنة، أنفسهم عفيفة، وحوادثهم خفيفة، صبروا أياما قليلة، فصاروا بعقبى راحة طويلة، أما الليل فصافون أقدامهم، تجري دموعهم على خدودهم، وهم يجأرون إلى ربهم، يسعون في فكاك رقابهم، وأما النهار فحلمااء علماء بررة، أتقياء كأفهم القدااح، قد براهم الخوف من العباداة، ينظر إليهم الناظر فيقول: مرضى، وما بالقوم من مرض، أم خولطوا، فقد خالط القوم أمر عظيم من ذكر النار وما فيها.

Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (A) was once asked what deed is most preferable to Allah, the Exalted. He replied,

After attaining inner knowledge of Allah and His Messenger, there is nothing better than despising this world. Know that this has many facets, just as transgression has many facets.

The first way Allah was transgressed against was through arrogance; this was Iblis's crime when he arrogantly refused [to bow before Adam]; he was one of the disbelievers.

Next came greed, which was Adam and Eve's transgression when Allah, the Exalted, told them: 'Eat of whatever you wish, but do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers' (7:19). They took what they did not need, and this [trait] was passed down to all their descendants until the Day of Judgment. This is why people mostly seek what they do not really need.

After that came jealousy; this was the sin of the son of Adam when he envied his brother and killed him. From this branches out love for women, love of this world, love of power, love of ease, love of speaking, and love of status and wealth. These seven vices can be summed up as 'love of his world', which is why the prophets and scholars – after understanding this world – have said that this world is the root of every evil, and that this world is actually two worlds: a world for maturing in, and the blameworthy worldliness.⁸

ما من عمل يعد معرفة الله عز وجل ومعرفة رسوله (ص) أفضل من بغض الدنيا، فإن لذلك لشعبا

كثيرة وللمعاصي شعبا، فأول ما عصي الله به الكبر وهو معصية إبليس حين أبى واستكبر وكان من الكافرين. والحرص، وهي معصية آدم وحواء حين قال الله عز وجل لهما: ﴿وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾. فأخذوا ما لا حاجة بهما إليه، فدخل ذلك على ذريتهما إلى يوم القيامة، وذلك أن أكثر ما يطلب ابن آدم ما لا حاجة به إليه. ثم الحسد، وهو معصية ابن آدم حيث حسد أخاه فقتله، فتشعب من ذلك حب النساء وحب الدنيا، وحب الرئاسة، وحب الراحة وحب الكلام وحب العلو والثروة، فصرن سبع خصال، فاجتمعن كلهن في حب الدنيا. فقال الأنبياء والعلماء بعد معرفة ذلك: حب الدنيا رأس كل خطيئة، والدنيا دنياؤان: دنيا بلاغ، ودنيا ملعونة.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said to Jabir,

O Jabir, even someone who enters the religion of Allah with a pure and sincere heart is distracted from it.

O Jabir, what is this world, and what can it ever be? What is it but the food you eat, the clothes you wear, and the woman that you acquire?

O Jabir, the believers do not feel content to remain in this world, nor do they feel secure of their reception in the Hereafter.

O Jabir, the Hereafter is the house that [people] will remain in, while this world is a house which is transient and ephemeral – but the people who are attached to this world (*ahl al-dunya*) are negligent. The believers understand; they reflect and take lessons. What their ears hear does not deafen them to the remembrance of Allah, nor does the allure that their eyes see blind them to the remembrance of Allah. They triumph in attaining the reward of the Hereafter just as they triumph in that new knowledge.⁹

يا جابر! إنه من دخل قلبه صافي خالص دين الله شغل قلبه عما سواه، يا جابر! ما الدنيا وما عسى أن تكون الدنيا؟ هل هي إلا طعام أكلته، أو ثوب لبسته أو امرأة أصبتها؟ يا جابر! إن المؤمنين لم يطمئنوا إلى الدنيا ببقائهم فيها ولم يأمنوا قدومهم الآخرة. يا جابر! الآخرة دار قرار، والدنيا دار فناء وزوال، ولكن أهل الدنيا أهل غفلة، وكان المؤمنين هم الفقهاء، أهل فكرة وعبرة، لم يصمتهم عن ذكر الله جل اسمه ما سمعوا بأذانهم، ولم يعمهم عن ذكر الله ما رأوا من الزينة بأعينهم، ففازوا بثواب الآخرة كما فازوا بذلك العلم الحديث.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

When Allah wishes good for a servant, he makes him abstain from this world, understand the religion, and perceive its [the world's] flaws. Whoever has been given these three things has indeed been given the good of this world and the next.¹⁰

إذا أراد الله بعبده خيراً زهّده في الدنيا وفقّهه في الدين وبصره عيوبها، ومن أوتيهن فقد أوتي خير الدنيا والآخرة.



It is forbidden for you to taste faith until you abstain from this world.¹¹

ألا إنه حرام عليكم أن تجذّبوا طعم الإيمان حتى تزهّدوا في الدنيا.



When the believer relinquishes this world, he rises above it and tastes the sweetness of love of Allah; the people of the world think he is afflicted. However, these people really have been affected by the sweetness of the love of Allah and occupy themselves with nothing else.¹²

إذا تخلى المؤمن من الدنيا سماً ووجد حلاوة حب الله وكان عند أهل الدنيا كأنه قد خولط، وإنما خالط القوم حلاوة حب الله فلم يشتغلوا بغيره.



When the heart is pure, it feels constricted by this earth and heads towards the heavens.¹³

إن القلب إذا صفا ضاقت به الأرض حتى يسمو.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

All goodness has been placed in a house whose key is abstaining from this world.¹⁴

جعل الخير كله في بيت وجعل مفتاحه الزهد في الدنيا.

He then said,

The Messenger of Allah (S) said, 'Man will not taste the sweetness of

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faith in his heart until stops caring about who has eaten from this world.¹⁵

لا يجد الرجل حلاوة الإيمان في قلبه حتى لا يبالي من أكل الدنيا.

He also said,

When someone abstains from this world, Allah puts wisdom in his heart and animates his speech with it. He shows him the flaws of this world – its ailments and their cures – and delivers him safely from the world into the abode of peace.¹⁶

من زهد في الدنيا أثبت الله الحكمة في قلبه، وأنطق بها لسانه وبصره عيوب الدنيا، دائها ودوائها، وأخرجه من الدنيا سالماً إلى دار السلام.

Imam al-Kazim (A) said,

Abu Dharr (R) said, 'May Allah reward me for denouncing this world: I took but two loaves of barley bread – one for lunch and one for dinner – and for taking but two woollen garments, one as a loin-cloth and one as a shawl.¹⁷

قال أبوذر رضي الله عنه: جزى الله الدنيا عني مذمة بعد رغبين من الشعر، أتعدى بأحدهما وأتعشى بالآخر، وبعد شملتي الصوف أترز بأحدهما وأتردى بالآخرى.

Imam al-Rida (A) said,

Jesus, son of Mary, said to his disciples, 'O children of Israel, do not grieve over what you have lost in this world since the people of this world do not grieve over their religion that they lose when they chase after this world.¹⁸

قال عيسى بن مريم للحواريين: يا بني إسرائيل لا تأسوا على ما فاتكم من الدنيا كما لا يأس أهل الدنيا على ما فاتهم من دينهم إذا أصابوا دنياهم.

Attachment to this world

It is narrated that the Prophet (S) said,

If, before Allah, the world were worth as much as the wing of a

mosquito, the disbelievers would never even drink a sip of water from it.¹⁹

لو كانت الدنيا تعدل عند الله جناح بعوضة ما سقى منها كافراً شربة ماء.



This world is a prison for the believer and a paradise for the disbeliever.²⁰

الدنيا سجن المؤمن وجنة الكافر.



The world is cursed – as is everything in it – except for what is [done] for Allah.²¹

الدنيا ملعونة ملعون ما فيها إلا ما كان لله.



How amazing it is that some attest to the eternal abode yet strive for this abode of delusion!²²

يا عجباً كل العجب للمصدقِ بدار الخلود وهو يسعى لدار الغرور.



Vying to accumulate [worldly gains] has distracted you. The son of Adam cries out, 'My wealth, my wealth!' But do you actually possess any of your wealth – except for what you give in charity, which leaves you – or that which you consume, which perishes – or that which you wear, which wears out?²³

﴿أَلَيْسَ الْكَافِرُ﴾، يقول بن آدم مالي مالي ! وهل لك من مالك إلا ما تصدقت فأَمْضَيْتَ أو أَكَلْتَ فأَفْنَيْتَ أو لبست فأَبْلَيْتَ.



A person who wakes up in the morning with worldly affairs as his greatest concern has nothing to do with Allah. Allah places four things in his heart: anxiety which never decreases, busyness which he never finds rest from, poverty which his wealth can never avail, and hopes that he can never realize.²⁴

IN CONDEMNATION OF THIS WORLD

من أصبح والدنيا أكبر همه، فليس من الله في شيء وألزم الله قلبه أربع خصال: همماً لا ينقطع عنه أبداً، وشغلاً لا يتفرغ منه أبداً، وفقراً لا ينال غناه أبداً، وأملاً لا يبلغ منتهاه أبداً.



After me, the world will come to you and consume your faith like fire consumes firewood.²⁵

لتأتينكم بعدي دنيا تأكل إيمانكم كما تأكل النار الحطب.



Do not occupy your hearts in remembrance of the world.²⁶

لا تشغلوا قلوبكم بذكر الدنيا.



Allah, the Exalted, revealed to Moses: 'Do not incline towards love of this world, for you will not come to Me with a graver sin than that.'²⁷

واوحى الله تعالى إلى موسى: لا تركنْ إلى حب الدنيا فلن تأتيني بكبيرة هي أشد عليك منها.

Jesus (A) said,

Alas for the man who makes his companion this world – he dies and abandons it. He relies on it, but it deludes him. How he trusts it, but it deceives him!

Alas for those who have been deluded – what they loathed caught up with them, while what they loved abandoned them, and what they were promised came to them.

Alas for the one who wakes up in the morning with worldly affairs as his greatest concern and who sins. How he will be exposed for his deeds tomorrow!²⁸

ويلٌ لصاحب الدنيا كيف يموت ويتركها، ويأمنها وتغره، ويتق بها وتخدله، ويل للمغتربين كيف ألزمهم ما يكرهون، وفارقهم ما يحبون، وجاءهم ما يوعدون، ويل لمن أصبح والدنيا همه والخطايا عمله، كيف يفتضح غداً بعمله.

Luqman advised his son,

O my son, sell your worldly life for your Hereafter, and you will profit in both. But do not sell your Hereafter for your worldly life, or you will lose both.²⁹

يا بنيّ بع دنيّاك بآخرتك تربحهما جميعاً، ولا تبع آخرتك بدنيّاك فتخسرهما جميعاً.

A sage was once asked who this world belongs to. He replied, 'The one who abandoned it.' Then he was asked who the Hereafter belongs to. He replied, 'The one who seeks it.'

Another sage said, 'This world is a house which is falling into ruin, but even more ruined is the heart of the person who builds upon it. Paradise is a flourishing abode, but even more flourishing is the heart of the person who seeks it.'³⁰

Descriptions of this world

Let us mention some of what has been related describing this world. Allah says:

The life of this world is like water which We send from the sky. It becomes mixed with the earth's greenery, and then it becomes chaff, scattered by the wind. (18:45)

The Prophet (S) said,

The world is a dream whose inhabitants are punished or rewarded.³¹

الدنيا حلم وأهلها عليها مجازون معاقبون.

To illustrate how little of this world remains compared to how much has passed, he said,

This world is like a piece of cloth, shredded from top to bottom, apart from a single thread which it hangs from, and which can break at any moment.³²

مثل هذه الدنيا مثل ثوب شق من أوله إلى آخره، بقي متعلقاً بخيط في آخره، فيوشك ذلك الخيط

أن ينقطع.

He also said,

This world compared to the Hereafter is like when one of you dips your finger into the sea and compares [that drop] with the source.³³

ما الدنيا في الآخرة إلا كمثل ما يجعل أحدكم إصبه في اليم فلينظر بم يرجع إليه من الأصل؟

The Commander of the Faithful (A) wrote to Salman (R) and described the world,

This world is like a snake that is soft to the touch but whose poison is deadly, so turn away from what pleases you in it, for little in it will benefit you. Relinquish your worries about it once you realize it will desert you. Your happiest time should be when you are most wary of it. Beware of it, for no sooner does someone feel at ease and pleased with it than it shows its loathsome character.

Peace be with you.³⁴

مثل الدنيا مثل الحية يلين مسها ويقتل سمها، فأعرض عما يعجبك منها لقلة ما يصحبك منها، وضع عنك همومها لما أيقنت من فراقها، وكن أسرُّ ما تكون منها، أحذر ما تكون منها، فإن صاحبها كلما اطمأن منها إلى سرور، أشخصته عنه مكروهة والسلام.

Al-Hasan ibn 'Ali (A) described it in these verses:

O you who delight in this world! It shall not last.
It is foolish to be tricked by a fleeting shadow.³⁵

يا أهل لذات دنیا لا بقاء لها
إن إغتراراً بظل زائل حق

Imam al-Baqir (A) said to Jabir,

Stay in this world as if it is a campsite that you rest in and move on from, or as if it is wealth that you find in a dream but that you have none of when you awaken. I have presented you with these comparisons because – to those with understanding and knowledge of Allah – the world is like a fleeting shadow.³⁶

فانزل الدنيا كمنزل نزلته ثم ارتحلته منه، أو كمال وجدته في منامك، فاستيقظت وليس معك منه

شيء، قال: إني إنما ضربت لك هذا مثلاً، لأنهما عند أهل اللب والعلم بالله كفيء الظلال.

He also said,

A person who covets this world is like a silkworm: the more it spins thread around itself, the harder it is for it to emerge, until it dies in pain.³⁷

مثل الحريص على الدنيا كمثل دودة القز كلما ازدادت على نفسها لثاً، كان أبعد لها من الخروج حتى تموت غماً.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

This world is like sea water: the more a thirsty person drinks from it, the more he thirsts – until it kills him.³⁸

مثل الدنيا مثل ماء البحر، كلما شرب منه العطشان ازداد عطشاً حتى يقتله.

It is narrated,

The world was personified to Jesus (A) as a blue-eyed old woman.

He asked her, 'How many have you married?'

She said, 'Very many.'

He asked, 'Did all of them divorce you?'

She replied, 'No, I killed them all.'

Jesus (A) said, 'Alas for your remaining spouses, for not learning from your previous ones – you destroyed them all, one by one, and they are still not wary of you!'³⁹

رُويَ إن عيسى (ع) كوشف بالدنيا فرآها في صورة عجوزة شطاء هتماء، عليها من كل زينة فقال لها: كم تزوجت؟ قالت: لا أحصيهم، قال: فكلهم مات عنك أو كلهم طلقك؟ قالت: بل كلهم قتلهم، فقال عيسى (ع): بؤساً لأزواجك الباقيات، كيف لا يعتبرون بالماضين، كيف قتلكنهم واحداً واحداً ولا يكونون منك على حذر.

Jesus (A) also said,

This world is a bridge, so cross it but do not build upon it.⁴⁰

الدنيا قنطرة فاعبروها ولا تعمروها.

A sage said,

How similar is man's delusion in this world – his negligence of death and the terrors to come as he immerses himself in ephemeral, fleeing pleasures tainted with filth – to a man clinging to a rope dangling inside a well. At the bottom of the well, a gargantuan serpent with jaws wide open waits for the man to fall so he can attack him. At the top of the well, two mice – one black and one white – gnaw at the rope, little by little, never ceasing – not even for a moment.

The man sees the serpent and knows the rope is being chewed bit by bit. However, he finds a little honey stuck to the inner wall of the well, mingled with dirt and surrounded by bees. He is so enraptured with his find – so engrossed in licking off the honey and fighting the bees over it – that he becomes completely distracted, and he pays no heed to the dangers above and below him.

The well represents the life of this world. The rope is our lifespan; the open-mouthed serpent is death; the two mice are night and day, slowly eating away at life; the dirt-tainted honey represents the pleasures of this world mixed with its filth and pains; and the bees are the worldly people – the 'children of the world' – vying against one another. How apt is this similitude of the world! We ask Allah for guidance and insight, and seek refuge in Him from negligence and temptation.

Notes

- ¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 129.
- ² Ibid., p. 129.
- ³ Ibid., p. 131.
- ⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 134; Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 147; al-Fattal, *Rawdat al-Wa'izin*, p. 482.
- ⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 136.
- ⁶ al-Radi, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 1, sermon 82.

- ⁷ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 131.
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 130.
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 132.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 130.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 128.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.; al-Tusi, *al-Amali*, p. 542.
- ¹⁷ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 134.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p. 137.
- ¹⁹ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 2, p. 134.
- ²⁰ al-'Awali, vol. 1, p. 95; Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 128; *Makarim al-Akhlaq*, p. 439; al-'Aqd al-Farid, vol. 2, p. 260.
- ²¹ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 190.
- ²² Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 128; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 191.
- ²³ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 130; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 191.
- ²⁴ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 130.
- ²⁵ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 194; Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 134.
- ²⁶ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 195.
- ²⁷ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 134.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 137.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p. 140.
- ³¹ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 202; Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 145.
- ³² Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 148.
- ³³ Ibid., p. 150.
- ³⁴ Ibid., p. 147.
- ³⁵ Ibid., p. 145.
- ³⁶ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 133.
- ³⁷ Ibid., p. 134.
- ³⁸ Ibid., p. 136.
- ³⁹ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 146.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 147.

BOOK 3

❖ Love of Wealth ❖

Introduction

Know that the trials of this world branch out many ways, each with vast extensions and implications. Wealth, however, is its greatest trial, its most overwhelming test. The greatest trial about it is that one can neither do without it, nor live in peace with it. When lost, it causes poverty, which borders on infidelity; when found, it causes arrogant rebellion, whose consequence is loss.

In short, it entails benefit and harm: it can be a cause of salvation or a cause of destruction. Distinguishing between the good and bad aspects of wealth is a dilemma that only people with insight into religion and well-grounded scholars can resolve. One without wealth is in one of two mind-sets: contentment or greed. Greed, in turn, leads to one of two mind-sets: coveting what others possess; or determination to work hard at skills or vocations without expecting anything from people. A person with wealth is also in one of two conditions: withholding and spending; and someone who spends is, in turn, in one of two conditions: squandering and spending economically. These matters are difficult to fathom, so it is important to lift the veil from these enigmas.

Allah says:

Your wealth and your children are a trial...Do not let your wealth and children distract you from the remembrance of Allah; those who do that are the losers. (64:15; 63:9)

The Prophet (S) said,

Love of wealth and status nurture hypocrisy just as water nurtures greenery.¹

حب المال والشرف ينبتان النفاق كما ينبت الماء البقل.



Two rapacious wolves hunting a lamb separated from its shepherd and herd are not nearly as perilous as the love of wealth and position is to the faith of a Muslim.²

ما ذئبان ضاريان أرسلتا في زريبة غنم بأكثر فساداً من حب المال والجاه في دين الرجل المسلم.



The son of Adam cries out, 'My wealth, my wealth!' But do you actually possess any of your wealth – except for what you give in charity, which leaves you – or that which you consume, which perishes – or that which you wear, which wears out?³

يقول ابن آدم: مالي مالي، وهل لك من مالك إلا ما تصدقت فأَمْضيت، أو أكلت فأفْنيت، أو لبست فأبليت.

A man once asked the Prophet (S),

'O Messenger of Allah, why do I dislike death?'

He replied, 'Do you have any wealth?'

He replied, 'Yes, O Messenger of Allah.'

He said, 'Send your wealth ahead of you, for [even] the believer's heart is attached to his wealth. If he sends it ahead, he will prefer to follow it; but if he leaves it behind, he will prefer to lag behind with it.'⁴

وقال رجل يا رسول الله: مالي لا أحب الموت؟ فقال: هل معك من مال؟ قال: نعم يا رسول الله.

قال: قدم مالك أمامك، فإن قلب المؤمن مع ماله إن قدمه أحب أن يلحقه، وإن خلفه أحب أن يتخلف معه.

Wealth can be good

Know that Allah has called wealth good in some places:

Prescribed for you, when death approaches any of you, and he leaves behind any wealth, is that he make a bequest for his parents and relatives in an honourable manner, an obligation on those who are conscious of Allah. (2:180)

The Prophet (S) said,

How beneficial honest wealth is to a righteous person!⁵

نعم المال الصالح للرجل الصالح.

All that has come down to us about the divine reward for giving charity, performing hajj, and spending in the way of Allah are in praise of wealth, since these things cannot be done without wealth.

In reality, wealth can be a tool for either wholesome or corrupt ends – the latter of which jeopardise eternal happiness and obstruct the path to knowledge and good deeds. Therefore, wealth is praised and condemned. It is praised when intended for praiseworthy goals, and condemned when intended for blameworthy goals. If someone has a natural tendency to follow desires that separate him from the path of Allah, and Allah makes this easy, then this tool [wealth] becomes more and more dangerous as it is acquired beyond what is necessary for self-sufficiency.

The prophets all sought refuge from its evil; our Prophet (S) said,

O Allah, make the provision of Muhammad's family only enough to suffice them so that they do not seek from this world anything that is not solely dedicated to goodness.⁶

اللهم اجعل قوت آل محمد كفافاً، فلم يطلب من الدنيا ما لم يتمحض خيره.



O Allah, let me live as a pauper, and make me die as a pauper.⁷

اللهم احيني مسكيناً وأمتني مسكيناً.

Its benefits and harms

Know that wealth is like a snake which has both venom and its antidote. Its benefit is in the antidote, and its danger is in the poison. Whoever recognises its benefits and dangers can protect himself from its evil and extract what is good from it.

The benefits of wealth can be divided into worldly and religious. There is no need to mention the worldly benefits since all peoples, far and wide, already know them; otherwise, they would not be destroying themselves in search of it. The religious benefits are of three types:

1. What a person spends for his own sake as an act of worship, or to facilitate an act of worship.
2. What a person spends on others. This is divided into four categories:
 - a. Charity. The rewards of charity are well known; it extinguishes the Lord's wrath.
 - b. Chivalry and courtesy (*muruwah*). Spending courteously refers to spending to entertain honourable and wealthy people through hospitality, giving gifts, offering assistance, and other such ways by which a person acquires brothers and friends in faith and

cultivates the quality of generosity, for someone who does not commit himself to acts of courteousness and good character cannot be described as generous. This too holds great rewards, and many narrations extol the merits of giving gifts, honouring guests, and feeding others who are not necessarily poor or needy.

- c. Safeguarding one's reputation. This refers to spending wealth to prevent tongues from wagging and the foolish from slandering, and to repel their evil. This has worldly and religious benefits, for the Prophet (S) said,

'Whatever someone uses to safeguard his reputation is a form of charity to himself.'⁸

ما وقى المرء به عرضه فهو له صدقة.

- d. Hiring (in employment). This is when someone has too much work to do. Were he to undertake it all himself, he would waste his time, and it would make it very difficult for him to pursue the path to the Hereafter through reflection and remembrance of Allah, which are the highest stations of the [spiritual] wayfarers.
3. The general good. This is when a person does not spend his wealth on a particular person but for the commonweal, such as building mosques, bridges, caravansaries, hospitals, drinking fountains on the roads, and other services whose usefulness persists after death and, for a long time, attract blessings through the prayers of the righteous who use them.

This is the sum of the religious benefits of wealth, except for all that is entailed by fulfilling one's immediate needs to be free from the humiliation of begging and the

ignominy of poverty; to enable one to walk with honour and dignity among people, with abundant family, friends, and associates; and to have respect and integrity in people's hearts.

The harms of wealth can also be divided into worldly and religious, the latter of which is also of three types:

1. Wealth leads to sins, since certain things are required to fulfil desires. Powerlessness [to fulfil those desires] blocks a person from sinning and is a defence (*'ismah*) against it.⁹
2. When someone despairs of being able to commit a particular sin, the drive to commit it will remain dormant. But if he senses that he can commit it, the drive is awakened. Wealth is one type of power that animates the drive to sin and to commit indecencies; if someone hurls himself towards what he craves, he will perish. If he holds himself back, he will feel it intensely since self-restraint in the face of the ability [to commit a sin] is tougher, and ease is a greater trial than hardship.
3. Wealth can lead people to overindulge in permissible things; this is the lowest level [of harm]. A wealthy man is perfectly capable of eating barley bread, wearing coarse clothes, and passing up tasty delicacies like Solomon did, even though Solomon was a king. Nevertheless, he prefers to live as luxuriously as he can afford to in this world. He accustoms his soul to this until he becomes attached to comfort, loves luxury and cannot do without it; this draws him farther and farther into indulgence. If he is attached to more than he can afford, he may not be able to attain it through lawful earning and may resort to

unscrupulous means, leading to disputes, boot-licking, lying, hypocrisy, and other vices to procure his worldly desires and indulge therein again. The more someone's wealth increases, the needier of others he becomes; and anyone who is in need of other people undoubtedly will act two-faced and will disobey Allah in his quest to please the people. A person who remains safe from the first harm – pursuing the forbidden – will not remain safe from this. It is from being in need of people that enmity and friendship arise; and on this need are founded jealousy, callousness, showing off, arrogance, dishonesty, backbiting, slander, and the other sins that are perpetrated by the heart and tongue – and which may even reach the other limbs. All this stems from the misfortune of wealth and the need to preserve and defend it.

4. The third harm – which no one is immune from – is that guarding wealth distracts people from the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted; and anything that diverts people from Allah is a loss.

This is why Jesus (A) said,

'Wealth has three characteristics. First, it is acquired through unlawful means.'

He was asked, 'What if it is acquired lawfully?'

He replied, 'Guarding it distracts people from Allah.'¹⁰

في المال ثلاث آفات، أن يأخذه من غير حِلِّه، فقيل: إن أَخَذَهُ من حِلِّه؟ قال: يضعه في غير حقه، فقيل: إن وضعه في حقه؟ فقال: يشغله إصلاحه عن الله.

This is a chronic disease, for the root, core, and secret of worship is remembering Allah and reflecting on His

majesty; this requires an unoccupied heart. Night and day, a landowner mulls over many things. He has a disagreement with the owner of a neighbouring farm. How should he handle him and best him? He has land and water disputes with his partners. He quarrels with the governor's men over taxes or getting planning permission for an extension. Similarly, a businessman constantly worries whether his partner is deceiving him and keeping the profits for himself while undercutting him in his work and causing losses. The same goes for a herdsman and those [responsible for] other types of wealth.

The wealth which would cause the least preoccupation would be buried treasure – but no one could ever stop thinking about that either. How to guard it so no one finds it? How to keep others from being greedy for it? Worldly people's thoughts are like a bottomless pit. Only someone who is contented with his provision for the day or the year will be safe from all this.

This is the sum of the religious harms of wealth – in addition to all the other harms that wealthy people face, such as fear, grief, worry, anguish, anxiety, and exhaustion in defending themselves from envious people and in guarding and acquiring their wealth. The antidote to wealth, therefore, is to take only what one needs and to spend the rest on charitable causes; any surplus is toxic and harmful.

When poverty is commendable

Know that poverty is commendable only when the pauper is content with his lot – when he has severed the desire for what others possess, and neither pays attention to what they have nor covets the acquisition of wealth by

any means possible. This can only happen when he contents himself with only what he needs and cuts short his hopes. If he stretches his neck to look beyond his means and lengthens his hopes, the honour of contentment eludes him and he becomes tainted with desire, the humiliation of greed, and little contentment. Greed and desire tug him towards unethical ways, to commit indecencies which are antithetical to manliness (*muruwwah*) – but man is predisposed to be greedy and covetous, barely contented.

The Prophet (S) said,

If the son of Adam had two valleys filled with gold, he would wish for a third beyond them, although his innards are filled with dust. Allah turns to those who turn back to Him in repentance.¹¹

لو كان لابن آدم واديان من ذهب، لا يتغى وراءهما ثالثاً، ولا يملأ جوف ابن آدم إلا التراب، ويتوب الله على من تاب.



Two insatiable desires will never be sated: the insatiable desire for knowledge and the insatiable desire for wealth.¹²

منهومان لا يشبعان: منهوم العلم ومنهوم المال.



The son of Adam ages, but two traits remain ever young: greed and high expectations.¹³

يشيب ابن آدم ويشبّ [هكذا في الاصل] فيه خصلتان: الحرص، وطول الامل.

Although humankind has this deceptive predisposition and destructive instinct, Allah and His Messenger have praised contentment. The Prophet (S) said,

Glad tidings be to the one who guides others to Islam while his livelihood is just sufficient, and he is content with it.¹⁴

طوبى لمن هدى للإسلام وكان عيشه كفافاً وقنع به.



On the Day of Judgment, everyone – rich or poor – will wish they had been given just enough provision in the world.¹⁵

ما من احد غني ولا فقير إلا ودَّ يوم القيامة أنه كان اوتي قوتاً في الدنيا.



O you who are poor, give Allah satisfaction (*rida*) from your hearts, and you will be victorious in the garment of your poverty. But if you do not, then you will not [be victorious].¹⁶

يا معشر الفقراء اعطوا الله الرضا من قلوبكم تظفروا بثواب فقركم، وإلا فلا.



[True] wealth is not material wealth, but rather is the self's needlessness.¹⁷

ليس الغنى غنى كثرة العرض، إنما الغنى غنى النفس.



The Holy Spirit gave me the inspiration that no soul shall die before it finishes its share of sustenance in this world, so be conscious of Allah and seek [sustenance] through decent means.¹⁸

إن روح القدس نفث في روعي أن نفساً لن تموت حتى تستكمل رزقها، فاتقوا الله وأجملوا في الطلب.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

O son of Adam, if you only want from this world what you will suffice you, then the least of what is in it will suffice you. But if you desire something beyond what you require, then everything in it will not be enough for you.¹⁹

يا ابن آدم إن كنت تريد من الدنيا ما يكفيك فإن أيسر ما فيها يكفيك، وإن كنت تريد ما لا يكفيك فإن كل ما فيها لا يكفيك.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Beware of setting your sights on what people above you possess. What Allah, the Exalted, told His Messenger is sufficient: 'Let not their wealth and children impress you' (9:54) and 'Do not stretch your eyes towards what We have provided certain groups of them, the glitter of the life of this world, so that We may test them thereby. And the provision of your Lord is better and more lasting' (20:131). If any of these [feelings] enter you, remind yourself of the Prophet's provision. His food was barley bread, his sweets were dates, and his firewood was palm leaves – if he found any.²⁰

إياك أن تطمح بصرك إلى من هو فوقك، فكفى ما قال الله تعالى لنبيه (ص): ﴿فَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ﴾ وقال: ﴿وَلَا تُمَدَّنْ عَيْنُكَ إِلَى مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ زَهْرَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا﴾، فإن دخلك من ذلك شيء فاذكر عيش رسول الله (ص)، فأنما كان قوته الشعر وحلواه التمر ووقوده السعف إذا وجد (وجده خ).

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Allah says: My believing servant is saddened when his means are straitened, although that brings him closer to Me. And he is gladdened when his means are expanded, although that distances him from Me.²¹

إن الله يقول: يحزن عبدي المؤمن إن قُتِرَتْ عليه وذلك أقرب له مني، ويفرح عبدي المؤمن إن وسعت عليه وذلك أبعد له مني.

The more [Allah's] servant's faith increases, the more his livelihood is constrained.²²

كل ما ازداد العبد إيماناً يزداد ضيقاً في معيشته.

Allah said in his intimate conversation with Moses,

O Moses, if you see poverty approaching, say, 'Welcome, O emblem of the righteous!' And if you see wealth approaching, say, 'The punishment for a sin has been hastened.'²³

يا موسى إذا رأيت الفقر مقبلاً فقل مرحباً بشعار الصالحين، وإذا رأيت الغنى مقبلاً فقل ذنب

Safety from the perilous trap of wealth

There is no rescue from the perils of wealth – except by adhering to certain principles.

1. A person should recognise the purpose of wealth. Why was it created? He should recognise that he has no need simply to possess it. He should save only as much as he needs.
2. A person should be cautious of how he acquires wealth. He should avoid that which is absolutely forbidden as well as that which is essentially forbidden. He should also avoid undesirable (*makruh*) means of earning which tarnish his sense of valour (*muruwwah*).
3. A person should be careful of how he spends. He should be economical, neither extravagant nor wasteful, for Allah said, 'Those who, when spending, are neither wasteful nor tight-fisted, and moderation lies between these [extremes]' (25:67). According to a hadith from the Prophet (S), 'Whoever economises will never be needy' (ما عال من اقتصد).²⁴
4. A person should spend his lawful earnings rightfully, not wrongfully, for earning wrongfully and spending wrongfully are equal sins.
5. He must rectify his intention in what he acquires and abandons – what he earns and spends – so that he acquires what he acquires to assist performing in acts of worship, and he abandons wealth ascetically, belittling [the wealth]. If he does this, the presence of wealth will not harm him.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

If a man acquires everything on earth, intending thereby the pleasure of Allah, he is an ascetic. And if he abandons it all without intending to please Allah, he is not an ascetic.²⁵

لو أن رجلاً أخذ جميع ما في الأرض، وأراد به وجه الله فهو زاهد، ولو أنه ترك الجميع ولم يرد وجه الله فليس بزاهد.

Some might ask which is better. Wealth – with the intent to use it to facilitate acts of worship? Or poverty – with the intention of being free to worship?

We would reply that the better of these two is the one which does not distract a servant from Allah. If poverty distracts someone from Allah, then wealth is better for him. If wealth distracts him from Allah, then poverty is better for him. This is because the virtue of poverty and wealth lie in the hearts disinterest in the presence or absence of wealth. If the heart is equally disinterested in both, then both are the same – except this is a slippery slope, a deceptive spot. A wealthy man may think that his heart is detached from his wealth, but his love for it may be buried so deep inside him that he cannot sense it. He would only realise it when he loses his wealth. So let him test himself! All wealthy people – except the prophets and the saints – are like this.

If this seems far-fetched or impossible, then let us say that poverty is sounder and better for most people. For a poor man is usually less attached to the world. Because of this weak (*du'f*) attachment, his rewards multiply (*yatada'if*) since the point of worship is not to move the body and tongue but rather to strengthen the bond with the Remembered One.

A heart which is devoid of all but the Beloved is

affected differently by worship than a preoccupied heart. This is why *hadith* extol the virtues of the poor over the virtues of the rich. However, it should be noted that 'poverty' does not imply not owning anything at all.

In a conversation with some Sufis, Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Allah taught His Prophet how to spend when he had some weight of gold. He hated for it to remain in his house overnight, so he gave it all in charity and awoke with nothing. When a beggar came to him, and he did not have anything to give, the beggar reproached him, although he was merciful and kind. So Allah instructed His messenger through His command: 'Do not keep your hand chained to your neck, nor open it altogether, or you will sit blameworthy, regretful.' (17:29)

People will ask from you, and will not excuse you; but when you give away all that you have, you will have incurred a loss regarding that wealth.

Who knows who ranked next in virtue and asceticism? Salman al-Farsi and Abu Dharr – may Allah be pleased with them both.

Salman was such that when he received his wage, he would take out a whole year's provision from it, in order to keep the rest ready to give beforehand.

He was asked, 'O Aba 'Abd Allah, you do this in your asceticism even though you might die today or tomorrow?' He replied,

What is with you – why you do not wish me a long life just as you fear my death? Do you not know, O ignorant people, that the soul weighs heavily on his owner when he does not have enough provision to depend on, but when his provision is safeguarded, it feels secure?

Abu Dharr had young camels and sheep that he would milk and slaughter when his family desired meat, when a guest arrived, or when he saw people who [lived on nothing but] water; he would slaughter a camel or sheep just for them until their hunger for meat had been satiated. He would divide it among them and would not take

a share greater than theirs, displaying no superiority over them. Who is more ascetic than these people? The Prophet (S) praised them as he did even though they did not own nothing – unlike you who command people to throw away their possessions and provisions which they still love more than their own selves and families.

Know, O people, that I heard my father narrated on the authority of his forefathers that the Prophet (S) once said, 'Nothing pleases and amazes more than the believer – if his body is cut to pieces in this world, he sees good in it; and if he owns everything from the east to west, he sees good in it; and whatever Allah does with him, he sees good in it.'²⁶

قال الصادق (ع) في كلام له مع الصوفية: ثم علم الله عز وجل نبيه (ص) كيف ينفق، وذلك أنه كانت عنده (ص) أوقية من الذهب فكره أن يبيت عنده فتصدق بها، فأصبح وليس عنده شيء وجاءه من يسأله، فلم يكن عنده ما يعطيه فلامه السائل، واغتم هو حيث لم يكن عنده ما يعطيه، وكان رحيما رقيقا (ص). فأذب الله تعالى نبيه (ص) بأمره فقال: ﴿وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَى عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا﴾. يقول: إن الناس قد يسألونك ولا يعطونك، فإذا أعطيت جميع ما عندك من المال كنت قد حسرت من المال. ثم من قد علمتم بعده في فضله وزهده سلمان وأبو ذر رضي الله عنهما. فأما سلمان فكان إذا أخذ عطاء رفع منه قوته لسنته، حتى يحضر عطاؤه من قابل.

ف قيل له: يا أبا عبد الله أنت في زهدك تصنع هذا وأنت لا تدري لعلك قوت اليوم أو غدا؟

فكان جوابه أن قال: ما لكم لا ترجون لي البقاء كما خفتم علي الفناء، أما علمتم يا جهلة أن النفس قد تلتاث على صاحبها إذا لم يكن لها من العيش ما يعتمد عليه، فإذا هي أحرزت معيشتها اطمأنت، وأما أبو ذر فكانت له نويقات وشويهاات يحلبها، ويذبح منها إذا اشتهى أهله اللحم، أو نزل به ضيف، أو رأى بأهل الماء الذين هم معه خصاصة، نحر لهم الجزور أو من الشياه على قدر ما يذهب عنهم بقرم اللحم، فيقسمه بينهم ويأخذ هو كنصيب واحد منهم لا يفضل عليهم، ومن ازهد من هؤلاء؟ وقد قال فيهم رسول الله (ص): ما قال ولم يبلغ من امرهما أن صارا لا يملكان شيئا البتة، كما تأمرون الناس باللقاء امتعتهم وشيئهم ويؤثرون به على أنفسهم وعيالهم.

واعلموا أيها النفر أي سمعت أي يروي عن آباءه أن رسول الله (ص) قال يوما: ما عجبت من

شيء كعجبي من المؤمن إن قرض جسده في دار الدنيا بالمقاريض كان خيراً له، وإن ملك ما بين مشارق الأرض ومغاربها كان خيراً له، وكل ما يصنع الله به فهو خير له.

Asceticism

It is clear from what we have said that there is no escape from the consequences and perils of this world except by abstaining from it – not to desire any of it in the heart except for what is necessary to sustain the body; this is a lofty position. Allah says:

So he emerged before his people in his finery. Those who desired the life of the world said, 'We wish we had like what Korah has been given! Indeed he is greatly fortunate.' Those who were given knowledge said, 'Woe to you! Allah's reward is better for someone who has faith and acts righteously, and no one will receive it except the patient.' (28:79-80)

He attributes asceticism to the knowledgeable ('*ulama*') and describes ascetics as 'those with knowledge' – and this is the highest praise. He, Might and Exalted, says:

Whoever desires the tillage of the world, We will give it to him, but he will have no share in the Hereafter. (42:20)

The Prophet (S) said,

Whenever someone awakens with worldly affairs as his greatest concern, Allah will place poverty between his eyes and scatter his affairs, and he will take nothing from this world except for what Allah has apportioned for him. Whenever someone awakens with the Hereafter as his greatest concern, Allah will take care of his concerns, protect his affairs, and place self-sufficiency in his heart. The world will be brought to him even if it resists.²⁷

من أصبح وهمه الدنيا، شتت الله عليه أمره، وفرق عليه ضيعته، وجعل فقره بين عينيه، ولم يأت من الدنيا إلا ما كتب له، ومن أصبح وهمه الآخرة، جمع الله له همه وحفظ عليه ضيعته، وجعل غناه في

قلبه واته الدنيا وهي راغمة.



When you see a servant of Allah who has been granted silence and restraint from this world then get closer to him, for he has found wisdom.²⁸

إذا رأيتم العبد قد أعطى صمتاً وزهداً في الدنيا، فاقربوا منه فإنه يُلقى الحكمة.



Abstain from this world, and Allah will love you. Abstain from what is in the hands of other people, and the people will love you.²⁹

أزهد في الدنيا يحبك الله، وأزهد فيما في أيدي الناس يحبك الناس.



Whoever wants Allah to grant him knowledge without being taught and guidance without being guided must abstain from this world.³⁰

من أراد أن يؤتیه الله علماً بغير تعلم وهدى بغير هداية، فليزهد في الدنيا.

Asceticism has three levels. The lowest level is out of desire for salvation from the Fire and other chastisements of the Hereafter; this is the asceticism of the fearful. The second level is out of desire for Allah's reward and heavenly bliss; this is the asceticism of the hopeful. The third level, which is the highest level, is done with no desire other than Allah and meeting Him; this is the asceticism of those with true knowledge (the 'arifs).

The rules for abstaining from this world are also divided into obligatory, recommended, and precautionary. It is obligatory to abstain from the unlawful, recommended to abstain from the permissible, and safer to abstain from all that is doubtful.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says,

Abstaining from this world is the key to the door of the next world

and immunity from the Fire. It consists in abandoning everything that preoccupies you from Allah, feeling neither regret nor pride for abandoning it, nor awaiting a feeling of pleasure resulting thereby, nor seeking any praise or recompense for it. Rather, he deems their passing him by as a relief and comfort for him, and their presence as a misfortune for him; thus he always flees from misfortune, clinging to that which brings him ease and relief. The abstemious one is he who chooses the Hereafter over this world, and abasement over glory, striving over rest, hunger over satiety, the wholesomeness of what is to come later over instant gratification, and remembrance over heedlessness. His self is in this world while his heart resides in the Hereafter.³¹

الزهد مفتاح باب الآخرة والبراءة من النار، وهو ترك كل شيء يشغلك عن الله من غير تأسف على فوقها ولا اعجاب في تركها ولا انتظار فرح منها وطلب محمدة عليها ولا عوض لها، بل ترى فوقها راحة وكونها آفة، وتكون أبداً هارباً من الآفة معتصماً بالراحة، والزاهد الذي يختار الآخرة على الدنيا، والذل على العز، والجهد على الراحة، والجوع على الشبع، وعافية (عاقبة خ) الأجل على محبة العاجل، والذكر على الغفلة، وتكون نفسه في الدنيا وقلبه في الآخرة.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) was asked about one who is abstinent in this world, so he replied,

It is one who leaves even the permissible in it for fear of having to account for it, and abandons the unlawful in it for fear of being punished over it.³²

الذي يترك حلالها مخافة حسابه ويترك حرامها مخافة عذابه.

Abstinence in this world does not entail losing all your wealth and forbidding yourself all that is permissible. Rather it means that you must not trust in what is in your hand more than what is with Allah.³³

ليس الزهد في الدنيا بإضاعة المال ولا تحريم الحلال، بل الزهد في الدنيا ان لا تكون بما في يدك أوثق منك بما عند الله.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

Restraint from this world is the fortress of hope, gratitude for every

blessing and a guard against all that Allah, Mighty and Exalted, has prohibited.³⁴

الزهد في الدنيا قصر الأمل وشكر كل نعمة، والورع عن كل ما حرم الله عز وجل.



All of asceticism is contained between two phrases in the Qur'an, where Allah, glory be to Him, says, 'so that you may not grieve for what escapes you, nor exult for what comes your way' (57:23), so whoever does not grieve over the past nor exults at what is to come has adopted asceticism from both sides, and by my life, this is complete in its meaning.³⁵

الزهد كله بين كلمتين من القرآن قال الله سبحانه: ﴿لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ﴾، ومن لم يأس على الماضي ولم يفرح بالآتي فقد اخذ الزهد بطرفيه، ولعمري إنه تمام في معناه.

Generosity and miserliness

Know abstinence bears the fruit of generosity, and desiring this world bears the fruit of miserliness. The servant [of Allah] should be such that when wealth is not available to him, he is content; and when it is available, he is generous and giving, for generosity is a quality of the prophets and a cornerstone of salvation.

The Prophet (S) explained,

Generosity is a tree of Paradise whose branches dangle down upon the earth; whenever someone grasps one of those branches, it leads him to Paradise.³⁶

السَّخَاءُ شَجَرَةٌ مِنْ شَجَرِ الْجَنَّةِ أَغْصَانُهَا مُتَدَلِّيةٌ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ، فَمَنْ أَخَذَ مِنْهَا غَصْنًا قَادَهُ ذَلِكَ الْغَصْنُ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ.



[The angel] Gabriel said, 'Allah, the Exalted, said: "This is the religion that I have chosen for Myself, and nothing will befit it except for generosity and good character, so honour it with them both as much

as you can.”³⁷

قال جبرائيل: قال الله تعالى: إن هذا دين ارتضيته لنفسى ولن يصلحه إلا السخاء وحسن الخلق، فأكرموا بهما ما استطعتم.



Allah has pre-disposed His vicegerents to nothing except generosity and good character.³⁸

ما جعل الله أوليائه إلا على السخاء وحسن الخلق.



Among the factors that attract forgiveness are distributing food, spreading peace, and kind speech.³⁹

إن من موجبات المغفرة بذل الطعام وإفشاء السلام وحسن الكلام.



Avoid being the brunt of the generous person's offence, for indeed Allah has taken him by the hand, and undoes his offence whenever he slips.⁴⁰

تجافوا عن ذنب السخيّ فإن الله أخذ بيده، كلما عثر أقاله.



Food given by a generous person is a cure while food given by a miser is an ailment.⁴¹

طعام الجواد دواء وطعام البخيل داء.



A generous person is close to Allah, close to people, close to Paradise, and far from the Fire; while a miser is far from Allah, far from people, far from Paradise, and close to the Fire.⁴²

إن السخي قريب من الله، قريب من الناس، قريب من الجنة، بعيد من النار، وإن البخيل بعيد من الله، بعيد من الناس بعيد من الجنة، قريب من النار.

An ignorant, generous man is more beloved to Allah than a devout miser. The worst affliction is miserliness, and the highest level of generosity is self-sacrifice – to be generous with wealth despite being in need of it. Allah has praised this:

They [the Ansar]⁴³ prefer [the Muhajirun] to themselves, though poverty be their own lot. (59:9)

The Prophet (S) said,

Whoever yearns to fulfil a desire but resists his desire, and is self-sacrificing, is forgiven.⁴⁴

أَيُّمَا إِمْرَأٍ إِشْتَهَى شَهْوَةً فَرَدَّ شَهْوَتَهُ وَآثَرَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ غُفِرَ لَهُ.

A poor person should not refrain from giving a little from his surplus, for the efforts of those who lack means – and the virtue therein – is greater than the great wealth which the wealthy give away.

The Prophet (S) said,

‘One dirham of charity can be better, before Allah, than a hundred thousand dirhams of charity.’

He was asked, ‘How is that, O Messenger of Allah?’

He replied, ‘One man gives a hundred thousand dirhams in charity from his expanse of wealth, and another man gives a single dirham in charity from the only two dirhams that he possesses – with pleasure. So the man who gave a single dirham is more virtuous than the one who gave a hundred thousand dirhams.’⁴⁵

قال النبي (ص): درهم من الصدقة أفضل عند الله من مائة ألف درهم، قيل: وكيف ذلك يا رسول الله؟ قال: أخرج رجل من عرض ماله مائة ألف يتصدق بها، وأخرج رجل درهماً من درهمن لا يملك غيرهما طيبة بها نفسه، فصار صاحب الدرهم أفضل من صاحب مائة ألف درهم.

Know that miserliness is withholding when it is necessary to give, and squandering is giving when it is

necessary to withhold. There is a praiseworthy middle way between the two – which should be called ‘generosity’ and ‘open-handedness’ – for the Messenger of Allah (S) was commanded:

Do not keep your hand chained to your neck, nor open it altogether. (17:29)

Those who, when spending, are neither wasteful nor tight-fisted, and moderation lies between these two. (25:67)

Therefore, generosity is the middle way between tight-fistedness and wastefulness, between open-handedness and stinginess. It is to assess whether giving or withholding is required. It is not enough for the hands to give when the heart is not pleased and objects. The heart should have no attachment to wealth unless it wants the wealth for itself – to spend it wherever the obligation lies – for the sake of shariah, chivalry, or habit. People vary in their sense of obligation to give for the sake of chivalry and habit, and this also varies in different situations; it appears disgraceful for a rich-person to be tight-fisted, but not so for a poor person. Stinginess between family members or relatives is more disgraceful than stinginess between strangers; the same with neighbours versus people who are far away. Similarly, tight-fistedness when hosting a guest is more disgraceful than tight-fistedness in business transactions.

The furthest extent of miserliness is withholding wealth out of a desire for the wealth itself, whereby this becomes more important than merely safeguarding wealth; this is the exact opposite of generosity and open-handedness.

Notes

- ¹ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 155; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 128.
- ² Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 155; al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 297; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 218.
- ³ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 156; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 128.
- ⁴ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 156.
- ⁵ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 158; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 220.
- ⁶ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 159; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 221.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 222; Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 160.
- ⁹ Theologically, 'ismah refers to the infallibility of the prophets and Imams from committing sins.
- ¹⁰ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 162.
- ¹¹ Ibid., p. 163; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 223.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 224.
- ¹⁶ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, no. 16655.
- ¹⁷ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 224; Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 163.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 138.
- ²⁰ Ibid., p. 137.
- ²¹ Ibid., p. 141.
- ²² Ibid., p. 261.
- ²³ Ibid., p. 263.
- ²⁴ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 226.
- ²⁵ Ibid., p. 247.
- ²⁶ al-Harrani, *Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, p. 266.
- ²⁷ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 104; al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 319.
- ²⁸ al-Daylami, *Irshad al-Qulub*, p. 104.
- ²⁹ al-Tusi, *al-Amali*, p. 149.

- ³⁰ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 208.
³¹ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 137.
³² al-Saduq, *'Uyun Akhbar al-Rida (A)*, vol. 2, p. 57.
³³ al-Saduq, *Ma'ani al-Akhbar*, p. 251.
³⁴ Ibid., p. 251.
³⁵ al-Radi, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, saying 439.
³⁶ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 170.
³⁷ Ibid.
³⁸ *al-Tarhib wa al-Tarhib*, vol. 3, p. 383.
³⁹ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 170.
⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 178.
⁴¹ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 230.
⁴² Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 171.
⁴³ The Ansar (lit. 'helpers') are the inhabitants of Medina who sheltered, assisted and helped the Meccan immigrants while the Muhajirun (lit. 'immigrants') set up new lives in Medina.
⁴⁴ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 172.
⁴⁵ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 192.

❖ In Condemnation of Love of Status ❖

Introduction

Know that status is rooted in the spread of one's reputation and fame. It is a great misfortune, and love of it is condemned. It is best to be indifferent, unless Allah has made someone famous for spreading His religion without ever seeking fame. Allah says:

This is the abode of the Hereafter which We shall grant to those who do not desire to domineer in the earth nor to cause corruption. (28:83)

The Prophet (S) said,

Love of status and wealth makes hypocrisy grow in the heart just like water makes vegetation grow.¹

حب الجاه والمال ينبتان النفاق في القلب كما ينبت الماء البقل.



Two rapacious wolves let loose into a pen of sheep are not nearly as destructive as love of status and love of wealth are to the faith of a Muslim.²

ما ذئبان ضاريان ارسلا في زريبة غنم بأكثر فساداً من حب الجاه والمال في دين الرجل المسلم.



People perish due to following their whims and loving praise.³

إنما هلك الناس باتباع الهوى وحب الثناء.



It is enough of a misfortune for someone – except for someone whom Allah has protected – for people to point him out with their fingers regarding his life or his religion.⁴

حسب إمراء من الشر إلا من عصمه الله أن يشير الناس إليه بالإصابع في دينه ودنياه.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

Give freely, but do not seek fame or raise your persona up so that you are known and mentioned. Be secretive and silent, and you will remain safe: you will gladden the good and anger the corrupt.⁵

تبذل ولا تشهر، ولا ترفع شخصك ولا تذكر بعلم واكنم واصمت تسلم، تسر الأبرار، وتغيظ الفجار.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Beware those leaders who seek leadership, for – by Allah – as soon as footsteps clatter behind them, they perish and take others along with them.⁶

إياكم وهؤلاء الرؤساء الذين يترأسون، فوالله ما خفقت النعال خلف رجل إلا هلك وأهلك.



Cursed be he who seeks leadership; cursed be he who makes it his ambition; cursed be he who talks to himself about it.⁷

ملعون من ترأس، ملعون من همّ بها، ملعون من حدّث بها نفسه .

The Prophet (S) said,

Many a man with naught but two threadbare garments is disregarded by people, but when he pleads to Allah, Allah grants his request. If he begs, 'O Allah, I ask you for Paradise', He grants him Paradise but does not give him anything in this world.⁸

رُبَّ ذي طمرين لا يؤبه له لو أقسم على الله لأبره، لو قال اللهم (إني خ) أسألك الجنة لأعطاه الجنة ولم يعطه من الدنيا شيئاً.



The lowest level of showing off is [a form of] polytheism. Allah loves the discreet, pious people who are not missed when they are absent, and are unnoticed when they are present. Their hearts are lamps of guidance, saved from all the dust-clouds of darkness.⁹

إن اليسير من الرياء شرك، وإن الله يحب الأتقياء والأخفياء الذين إذا غابوا لم يفقدوا وإذا حضروا لم يعرفوا، قلوبهم مصابيح الهدى، ينجون من كل غبراء مظلمة.

Know that status and wealth are two pillars of this world. 'Wealth' refers to assets possessed and used for profit, gain, and fulfilling desires. 'Status' refers to the power sought by the hearts so they might be exalted, celebrated, and obeyed; and so they might wield their influence over other people for profit and material gain.

Just as riches are acquired by [engaging in] various professions and trades, hearts are also acquired through various dealings. Hearts yield only to what they know or believe in, and whenever the heart thinks that something has an attribute of perfection, it will become subservient to it – in proportion to the strength of its belief in and the level of its perfection. It does not need to see an attribute of perfection in reality; it is enough for the heart to think it is perfect. It is possible to believe that something imperfect is perfect, and for the heart to concede and yield to that belief; the heart naturally follows its beliefs, knowledge, and imagination.

Just as someone smitten with wealth seeks to control slaves and servants, someone hankering after status seeks to subjugate the free and make them subservient to him; by controlling their hearts, he controls them. Nay – the status-seeker wants more control, for the slave-master forces his slave to obey, and the slave is naturally

disinclined towards him; were the slave to be freed, he would flee from servitude. The status-seeker, however, demands wilful obedience and wants free people to become his willing slaves, naturally and happily accepting their bondage and obedience to him. Their hearts yield to him to the degree of their belief in his perfection. The more their hearts yield to him, the more power he holds over them; the greater his power, the greater his joy – and the greater his love of status becomes.

A person with high status enjoys the fruits of praise and acclaim, for when someone believes that something is perfect, he does not remain quiet about it; rather, he glorifies and praises it. He also enjoys the fruits of servitude and aid, for when someone believes in someone, he does not hold back from offering himself in obedience and service – to the degree that he believes in him. Additionally, he enjoys preferential treatment, being uncontested, being celebrated, commanding respect, being greeted first and with reverential respect in gatherings, and being given special treatment in all situations.

Controlling hearts outweighs controlling wealth for several reasons:

1. Attaining wealth through status is easier than attaining status through wealth. A scholar or ascetic who occupies a high position in people's hearts could easily acquire wealth through his status – if he wanted to – for people's hearts rule over their riches, and they freely give up that wealth to those whom they believe have some attribute of perfection. But if someone without the status to protect his wealth finds buried treasure, it would be difficult for him to buy status with his wealth.

IN CONDEMNATION OF LOVE OF STATUS

2. Wealth is prone to loss and ruin, for it is stolen, usurped, and coveted by kings and tyrants. It needs to be guarded and protected, and is exposed to many perils. However, people's hearts – when possessed – do not fall prey to these afflictions, for status is safe from theft and extortion. Yes, hearts can be usurped by sowing dissention in them – by showing them a repugnant, distorted picture of the one they believe has attributes of perfection – but this is easily defended against.
3. Control over people's hearts spreads, grows, and increases by itself without any need to take pains or effort for it, for when people's hearts yield to a person and believe he is perfect in his knowledge, deeds, or some other attribute, their tongues invariably express what is in them. They describe the one they believe in to others, spreading it far and wide until other hearts yield to and glorify that person too. Thus it [influence] spreads from one person to another, unresisted. When someone owns something, however, he only owns that specific thing and cannot make it grow without undergoing painstaking efforts and hardship.

Love of accumulating wealth – of hoarding the most treasured treasures, storing up supplies, and multiplying assets – underlies all needs. So too does love of fame, the desire for one's reputation to spread to the farthest corners of the earth – even though a person knows he may never visit those places or those peoples so that they might glorify him or even assist him in his ambitions.

This has two reasons: one obvious, and the other enigmatic – which eludes the understanding of even astute people, let alone fools, for it sprouts from a stem

hidden within the soul, a concealed corner of the natural disposition that can almost never be uncovered – except by those who delve deep.

The obvious reason is to stave off fear, for a person with a pessimistic view of the future will always suffer. Even if someone is self-sufficient today, he thinks far ahead and imagines that the wealth that suffices him now may run out, and he will need more. When such thoughts enter his mind, they arouse fear in his heart – an affliction which can only be removed by the sense of security that more wealth is at hand that he can resort to, should disaster befall this wealth. He is constantly anxious inside, worried because of his love for the life of this world as long as he lives, and as long as he has needs, and as long as the possibility of calamity befalling his wealth persists. Terrified, he seeks the antidote to his fear – abundant wealth, so if some of it were afflicted by disaster, the rest would still suffice him.

This is a fear which has no end when wealth is fixed. Consequently, his desires will never end until he possesses everything in the entire world.

Two types of greedy people are never satiated: the seeker of the world, and the seeker of knowledge.¹⁰

منهومان لا يشبعان منهوم العلم ومنهوم المال.

This is why a person is driven to seek status and repute abroad, in the hearts of those distant from his homeland, for he refuses to dismiss the possibility that he might need more supporters, were he to be unsettled from his home – or were they to be unsettled from theirs and come to his.

The enigmatic reason – which is the stronger – is that the spirit is a divine matter which, by nature, loves

lordship – and the meaning of ‘lordship’ is exclusive perfection. Servitude is imposed on the self, but when the self fails to attain this perfection, it does not cease to aspire towards it: it loves this perfection, it desires it, and delights in it above anything else. Every being loves itself and its own perfection, and hates destruction – either by becoming non-existent, or by losing attributes of perfection. Power over wealth and people naturally become beloved, even if someone does not need it to attain food, clothing, or his immediate desires. For that reason, he seeks to control slaves and subjugate the free, even by force or compulsion.

True perfection

Know that true perfection is that which brings its bearer close to Allah and which remains a perfection in his soul after his death. This is nothing other than knowledge of Allah, His attributes, His acts, His wisdom in the realms of the heavens and the earth and in His arrangement of the world and the Hereafter, and everything connected with Him. Then, it is freedom – by which I mean emancipation from the bonds of desires and worldly woes, conquering them with angelic power – for the angels do not become agitated, even though they love, and do not stumble due to anger.

Such a person’s wealth only serves to support learning more about Allah – just as knowledge of Arabic, Qur’anic exegesis, jurisprudence, narrations, and self-purification are all means to facilitate the acceptance of divine guidance to understand more about Allah. He, Mighty and Exalted, says:

Successful is the one who purifies it [the soul]. (91:9)

As for those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them in Our ways. (29:69)

It is a means to knowledge of Allah and to attaining freedom, and hence cannot be done without (although it is not necessary in and of itself).

Power, too, offers no real perfection to the servant of Allah since he can never hold true power. True power belongs only to Allah, the Exalted; and anything which follows – such as a servant's free will, power, or actions – are created and assigned their places by Allah. Yes, a type of perfection can be attained with this limited power and in this limited state, such as bodily health, a firm grip, the ability to walk, and sharpness of the senses; these too are a means to attaining the perfection of knowledge, a tool to arrive at the true perfection of knowledge. In order to preserve these abilities, he may require the power that wealth and status can afford him by helping him attain food and clothing, but that is only temporary; for if he does not use them to arrive at true knowledge of Allah, they will be absolutely useless and will give him immediate pleasure which will soon wane.

Man cannot attain complete power that will remain after his death since his power is limited to objects of material value which are at the disposal of people's hearts. Bodies wither and decay after death; whoever supposes this to be perfection is ignorant indeed. All creatures are drowning in this same delusion, supposing that perfection is the physical power that the bodies feel through the stifling of decency, and in material objects through vast riches, and in the adoration of the hearts through fame and fortune. And when they believe perfection to be thus,

they love it; and when they love it, they pursue it; and in pursuing it, they preoccupy themselves with it and destroy themselves in its pursuit, and in the process, they forget the true perfection that brings about closeness to Allah and to His angels – and this is real knowledge and emancipation.

These are the people who have bought the life of this world at the expense of the Hereafter, and the chastisement will neither be lightened for them nor will they be helped, and they are the ones who do not understand His words, 'Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of the world, but lasting righteous deeds are better with your Lord in reward and better in hope.' (18:46)

True knowledge and emancipation are the lasting righteous deeds that remain as a form of perfection in the soul, and wealth and status are ephemeral, quick to expire, as Allah illustrates:

The parable of the life of this world is that of water which We send down from the sky. It mingles with the earth's vegetation from which humans and cattle eat. When the earth puts on its lustre and is adorned, and its inhabitants think they have power over it, Our edict comes to it, by night or day, whereat we turn it into a mown field, as if it did not flourish the day before. Thus do We elaborate the signs for a people who reflect. (10:24)

Everything that can be laid bare by the winds of death is an 'adornment of the life of this world', and all that death cannot destroy are 'lasting righteous deeds'.

You have come to know, therefore, that the perfection of power afforded by wealth and status is an imagined power that has no basis, and that whoever wastes time in the pursuit of such and supposes them as the goal is ignorant, except for those who use them as a means to true perfection.

A little status is necessary

Know that just as a little wealth is necessary to procure food and clothing, a little status is also necessary to survive in society. Just as a man cannot do without food, and is permitted to want it and the money to purchase it, he also cannot do without a servant to serve him, a friend to aid him, and a governor to protect him from evil tyrants.

He cannot be blamed for wanting a place in his servant's heart so his servant might serve him well. Nor can he be blamed for wanting a place in his friend's heart so his friend might be true in his companionship and assistance. Nor can he be blamed for wanting a place in his teacher's heart so his teacher might perfect his instruction, guidance, and care. Nor can he be blamed for wanting a place in the governor's heart so the governor might protect him from harm.

Status, like wealth, is therefore a means to an end; so there is no difference between them in this regard. This end is only attainable when wealth and status are not beloved in and of themselves. To do so would be like someone loving the toilet in his house for itself. Rather, since he is compelled to answer the call of nature and relieve himself, he prefers to have a toilet in his house. The same goes for wealth and status, except that a person who loves them is not considered corrupt or disobedient until and unless that love drives him to commit sins, or to acquire them through lying, deceit, underhanded means, or using acts of worship.

The acquisition of wealth and status through acts of worship is a crime against religion and is expressly forbidden, and comes under showing off. Acquiring them

clandestinely and secretly, that no one should find out about it lest he lose his current position, is considered an act of shame and disobedience, but it is allowed at the same time, because covering up misdeeds is allowed – or, rather, the disclosing of secrets and exposing misdeeds is not allowed.

This is not considered deception, but rather concealing the knowledge of something from someone who would not benefit from knowing it. The example of this is like someone who hides the fact that he drinks alcohol from the governor, but nor does he give him the impression that he is pious. Pretending to be pious would be deception; however, simply hiding the fact that he drinks does not automatically lead to the belief that he is pious, but conceals the knowledge of it from him.

Love of praise

The love of praise and commendation has various causes:

1. The first of these, which is the strongest, is the soul's own sense of perfection. The more the soul senses perfection in itself, the more it is comforted, moved, and pleased. Praise fills the soul of its recipient with a sense of his own perfection, and it feels great pleasure whenever the commendation comes from an insightful person with expertise in the field who does not speak haphazardly. This is the same reason why one also despises reproach or criticism, because he feels a sense of lack in himself.
2. The second cause is that praise leads the heart of the applauder to belong to the applauded, for he admires him, believes in him, and is subject to his will. To have

such control over hearts is much loved by the soul, and the feeling that ensues is very pleasurable. The degree of pleasure experienced is in direct proportion to the sphere of influence of the applauder, and the benefit that the applauded one will incur as a result of having captured his heart, as with kings and important people. For this reason too, one hates to be reproached and is pained by it.

3. The third cause is that the praise and commendation of admirers leads the heart of whoever hears them to be captured, especially if the latter is a person who would pay attention to such words and believe the praise, and this is especially true of praise that is heaped upon leaders.
4. The fourth cause is that praise leads the one anticipating the praise to become bashful and coy, and this compels the admirer to praise him and to commend him, whether he wants to or not. The feeling of coyness too is pleasurable in the hold or power that it can have over people.

A single admirer may exhibit all these causes. His praise may inspire great pleasure. That false sense of perfection can be easily shattered by the praised one simply acknowledging that the praise is insincere. No sooner does he acknowledge that the applauder does not really believe in what he is saying than the cause for the second type of pleasure also shatters, which is the capture of his heart. The only pleasure left, then, is the pleasure of having compelled someone to praise him with mere lip service in response to his coyness.

Remedying love of status

Know that whoever is overcome by the love of status in his heart is forced to comply with other people. He becomes obsessed with making himself beloved to them, and dissimulates for their sake. In both speech and action, he continuously thinks about what will raise his status in their eyes, and this is the very seed of hypocrisy and the basis of corruption. This, in turn, will undoubtedly pull him to neglect his acts of worship and to use them to show off, and to perpetrate prohibited acts, all in order to capture people's hearts.

This is why the Prophet (S) drew the similitudes,

Two rapacious wolves hunting a lamb separated from its shepherd and herd are not nearly as perilous as the love of wealth and position is to the faith of a Muslim.¹¹

ما ذئبان ضاريان ارسلتا في زريبة غنم بأكثر فساداً من حب الجاه والمال في دين الرجل المسلم.



Love of status and wealth makes hypocrisy grow in the heart just like water makes vegetation grow.¹²

قال النبي (ص) في حب الجاه والفروة: إنه ينبت النفاق كما ينبت الماء البقل.

Hypocrisy is the contradiction between man's inward state and what he displays outwardly through his speech and actions. Whoever seeks out position among people is bound to fall prey to behaving hypocritically with them by displaying praiseworthy characteristics that he does not really possess, which is the very crux of hypocrisy.

The intellectual treatment of this is for him to acknowledge the reason why he loves status, which is the desire for complete power over people and over their hearts, and to acknowledge that even if it is a pure and

clean love, it will still end with death, and will not be counted among the lasting righteous deeds. Even if every single person on the face of the earth was to prostrate before him for fifty years, neither he nor they would remain; and his situation would be the same as the seekers of prestige before him and their followers. This should be abandoned in place of the faith that is the eternal life that will never cease. When he comes to understand true perfection and illusory perfection as mentioned before, prestige will seem insignificant in his eyes, and in fact, it appears insignificant to all those who set their sights on the Hereafter. They see this world as contemptible, and death as a surety.

Most people's sights, however, are weak and limited to what is immediate. Their sights do not stretch far enough to be able to see the end results, as Allah expresses:

Rather you prefer the life of this world, while the Hereafter is better and more lasting. (87:16-17)

No indeed! Rather you love this transitory life, and forsake the Hereafter. (75:20-21)

If this is the farthest that he can see, then he must cure his heart of the love of prestige by acknowledging the immediate harms of it. He must ponder over the dangers faced by people in high worldly positions; for every person in a position of power is highly envied and intended to be harmed by others, constantly fearful of losing his status and wary of losing his hold over people's hearts. For hearts boil over faster than water in a pot. They fluctuate between leaning towards and away from something; all that is built on human hearts might as well have been built on the waves of the sea, for there is no stability therein.

IN CONDEMNATION OF LOVE OF STATUS

Observing people's hearts, protecting one's status, defending against the plots of jealous people, and avoiding the injury of enemies – this business preoccupies a person from Allah and exposes him to His wrath in this life as well as the next. These are all immediate afflictions that mar the pleasure of prestige, so he is not gratified in this world, constantly weary of all that he dreads, let alone what he loses in the Hereafter. It is incumbent, then, that such a person cure his short-sightedness; for when someone uses his sight effectively, his faith remains strong and he does not pay attention to this world. This is the intellectual treatment of the love of prestige.

On a practical level, this is treated by removing love of status from the heart through becoming used to being obscure, acceptance of divine will, withdrawing from people, and migrating to out-of-the way places. For a man who secludes himself in his house in a town where he is famous will continue to love the position and prestige which he gains in their hearts precisely because of his solitude. He may imagine that he does not love that status, but he is only deluding himself, for his self is pacified since it has achieved the victory that it intended.

If the people change their views of him and instead disparage him or criticize him in a way that he does not deserve, his soul will be greatly grieved and pained, and he may make excuses to try to efface that taint from their hearts. In that effort, he may even resort to dishonesty and deceit, thus proving that he still craves status and prestige.

As long as a person's ambitions lie with the people, he will always want a place in their hearts. Ambitions are only curtailed by contentment, for a content person is

needless of others. When he is needless of them, his heart will not be preoccupied with pleasing them, and he will give no weight to attaining a place in their hearts. He will take succour from the narrations which condemn love of status and praise indifference to it – such as, ‘The believer is never free from humility, affliction, and lack.’

Love of status is like love of praise. Both are equal with regards to their prohibition, permissibility, benefits, and harms. Love of praise is treated like love of status – by a person acknowledging that if he loses whatever attribute he is being praised for, he will be mocked. It is but a worldly illusion of perfection; true perfection is the perfection which persists in the Hereafter.

Dislike of criticism is treated by acknowledging that if the criticism is accurate, it provides insight into one’s flaws. It should be a source of joy, and the person being criticized should busy himself in removing that flaw. If, however, the criticism is inaccurate, then it acts as expiation for his sins, and he should thank Allah for His mercy in humbling his base self. When the Prophet’s (S) teeth were knocked out, he said,

O Allah, guide my people for they do not know.¹³

اللهم اهد قومي فإنهم لا يعلمون.

Man rejoices when his enemy is criticized, and his own self is his enemy. He should rejoice when he is criticized and thank his critic. He should credit his critic’s astuteness and insight in uncovering his flaws. That will help him heal himself and profit, for the criticism will reduce him in the eyes of the people and ensure that he remains unafflicted with the trial of status. If he then performs good deeds, he will not elevate himself since he

will still be restoring the flaws he could not efface. If he strives his entire life to cultivate only one characteristic, it should be that he sees a person who praises him and a person who criticises him as equal; this will busy him so much that he will have no time to bother with anyone else. Many obstacles stand between himself and ultimate salvation; this is but one obstacle that can be removed through a lifetime of effort.

Notes

¹ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 155; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 260.

² Ibid.

³ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 260.

⁴ Ibid., vol. 3, p. 258. 'Protected' here refers to '*ismah*, or the divine protection from sins granted to the prophets and Imams.

⁵ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 6, p. 38.

⁶ Ibid., p. 297.

⁷ Ibid., p. 298.

⁸ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 259.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 223.

¹¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 298.

¹² Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 256.

¹³ This occurred during the Battle of Uhud. Ibid., p. 99.

❖ Self-Delusion ❖

Introduction

Self-delusion is when the soul contents itself with what suits the base desires, and when its nature inclines to this because of Satan's deception. Whenever someone believes he is in the right regarding a dubious, corrupted matter – either worldly or otherworldly – he is deluding himself. Allah says,

Do not let the life of the world deceive you, nor let the Deceiver deceive you concerning Allah. (31:33)



But you cast yourselves into temptation, and you awaited and were doubtful, and [false] hopes deceived you until the edict of Allah arrived, and the Deceiver deceived you concerning Allah. (57:14)

The Prophet (S) said,

Commendable is the sleeping and eating [as opposed to fasting] of the wise. How [through their wisdom] they thwart the sleepless nights and fruitless labour of the foolish! An iota of good from a God-conscious man with conviction is better than all the earth from the self-deluded.¹

حيذا نوم الأكياس وفطرتهم كيف يغبنون سهر الحمقى واجتهادهم، ولثقال ذرة من صاحب تقوى
ويقين أفضل من ملء الأرض من المغترين.



SELF-DELUSION

The wise person is the one who lowers his base self and works for what is after death, and the fool is the one whose base self follows his desires and who entertains high hopes from Allah.²

الكيس من دان نفسه وعمل لما بعد الموت، والأحمق من اتبع نفسه هواه وتمنى على الله الأماني.

Let us elucidate with an example of self-delusion. An example is when some disbelievers and hedonists say, 'Cash in hand is better than deferred payment, and the life of this world is cash in hand, while the Hereafter is deferred payment, so the world should be preferred over the Hereafter.' Or they say, 'Certainty is better than uncertainty. Since we are certain about the pleasures of this world and are uncertain about those of the Hereafter, certainty should not be abandoned for uncertainty.' These are flawed deductions resembling Satan's own fallacy when he inferred,

I am better than him [Adam]', he said. 'You created me from fire and You created him from clay.' (38:76)

And these are the people referred to in Allah's words:

They are the ones who bought the life of this world for the Hereafter; so their punishment shall not be lightened, nor will they be helped (2:86).

This self-delusion is treated either by believing Allah when He says:

That which is with you will be spent, but what is with Allah shall last. (16:96)

...while the Hereafter is better and more lasting. (87:17)

The life of this world is nothing but the wares of delusion. (3:185)

or by exposing them to the flaw in this fallacy which Satan has articulated in their hearts. The first analogy has two premises – the first that the world is 'cash in hand'

whereas the Hereafter is 'deferred payment', and this is true. The second is that cash in hand is better than deferred payment, and this is where the deception lies, for it is not like that. If the present gain were equal to the deferred gain in amount and value, then this would be valid. However, if the immediate profit is less, then the deferred profit is obviously better.

In his own business, this deluded individual would spend money today to reap ten times the amount tomorrow; he would not say, 'Cash in hand today is better than deferred profit tomorrow, and, therefore, I will not pursue it.' Similarly, if the doctor cautioned him against eating fruits and delicious foods, he would abstain from them today for fear of suffering pain and disease in the future; he would abstain from instant gratification and settle for a deferred gain. All merchants board ships and exhaust themselves in journeying to reap profits and comforts tomorrow. So if ten [times the profit] later is better than one now, how long does enjoyment last in this world compared to the Hereafter?

Their second assertion – that certainty is better than uncertainty, and that the life of this world is certain while the Hereafter is uncertain – is even more erroneous than the first since both its premises are invalid. Certainty is only better than uncertainty when they refer to the same thing. Otherwise, a businessman is certain about his effort but remains uncertain about his profit. A jurist is certain about his scholarly diligence but remains uncertain about his actual knowledge. A hunter is certain about his movements when tracking his prey but is uncertain whether he will catch it. Similarly, a sick patient is certain about the bitterness of his medicine but remains uncertain

whether it will be effective.

Since reasonable people act prudently, and it is always better to err on the side of caution, a person who doubts about the Hereafter should tell himself to wait patiently for these few days, for the length of the life of this world is much shorter compared to what has been said of the Hereafter. If the descriptions of the Hereafter turn out to be false, he will only have lost out on a few luxuries and pleasures in this life. But if they turn out to be true, it would be unbearable for him to abide eternally in the Fire.

The second premise – that the Hereafter is uncertain – is also false, for, according to the believers, it is a certainty. There are two ways to attain conviction in it: first, through the prophets' and scholars' belief in and attestation to it; and, second, through the revelation and inspiration given to the prophets and saints, where they have been shown the truth of things as they truly are and have witnessed them with their inner eye just as we witness objects with our outer eye. They tell of these experiences as eyewitnesses, not from hearsay or blind imitation.

People are self-deluded about Allah when they believe – and even say – that if Allah had a Hereafter, they would be the worthiest and most deserving of it, and the most fortunate therein.³

Allah has described such people in the Qur'an, in His parable about two men conversing with one another, when one says to the other:

I do not think that this will ever perish, and I do not think that the Hour will ever set in. And even if I am returned to my Lord I will surely find a resort better than this. (18:36)

This is a flawed analogy from Satan, for, first, they look

at the blessings that Allah has bestowed upon them in this life and equate them to the blessings of the Hereafter, and see that Allah has kept His punishment away from them in this world and equate it to the punishment in the Hereafter. Allah says about them, 'And they say to themselves, "Why does Allah not punish us for what we say?"' (59:8) Second, they look at the believers, worn and wearied, and deride them and scorn them:

Are these the ones whom Allah has favoured from among us? (6:53)

Had it indeed been [something] good, they would not have taken the lead over us towards [accepting] it. (46:11)

They falsely deduce that since Allah has favoured them with blessings in this world, and since anyone who favours them must necessarily love them, then He will also bestow the same on them in the future. The basis of their self-delusion lies in their assumption that anyone who favours them must necessarily love them, and in their assumption that the bestowal of blessings in this world automatically denotes favouring.

Such a person is deluded about Allah, for he believes He is being kind to him, with the proof being the blessings He has bestowed; whereas people with insight would consider that abasement, not kindness. The blessings and pleasures of this world are destructive forces that distance a person from Allah and they know that when Allah loves one of His servants, He protects him from this world, just as one would protect his loved one who fell ill from food and drink, even though he may love it.

The treatment for such a self-deluded person is for him to learn to recognize what indicates Allah's kindness and what indicates His abasement – either through insight or following. Allah says:

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Do they suppose that whatever aid We provide them in regard to wealth and children [is because] We are eager to bring them good? Rather they are not aware! (23:55)

As for those who deny Our signs, We will draw them imperceptibly [into ruin], whence they do not know. (7:182)

We opened for them the gates of all [good] things. When they rejoiced in what they were given, We seized them suddenly, whereat, behold, they were despondent. (6:44)

Their self-delusion is rooted in their ignorance about Allah and His Attributes, for one who truly knows Him would never feel safe from His plan and would not be so remiss as to entertain such fantasies. He would consider the examples of Pharaoh, Korah, and the kings of the earth, and how Allah bestowed gifts on them in the beginning and then utterly destroyed them.

They plotted, and Allah also devised, and Allah is the best of devisers. (3:54)

And no one feels secure from Allah's devising except the people who have lost. (7:99)

Groups of Self-Deluded People

Know that there are many different groups who are self-deluded, each with their own reasons for delusion.

Some see wrong as right, like those who lavishly adorn mosques with unlawfully earned wealth. Some do not differentiate between striving for one's self and striving for the sake of Allah, such as the preacher whose motive is popularity and prestige. Some abandon what is more important in favour of what is less important, such as the one who abandons the obligatory prayer and instead busies himself in performing the supererogatory one.

Some abandon the kernel of something and occupy themselves with the shell, like the one whose actual adherence to the prayer is limited because he entertains doubts in his intention, or is too busy perfecting his pronunciation of the letters, until he misses the congregational prayer or the prescribed time for the prayer passes him by. His heart was never present in the prayer although he presumed that his fastidiousness in perfecting his intention and pronunciation distinguished him above the rest of the people.

Some are deluded in reciting the Qur'an. They speed through it, perhaps completing it in a single night and day. As its words flow from their tongues, their hearts frequent the valleys of desire.

Some delude themselves in fasting. They may fast their entire lives but do not guard their tongues from backbiting, nor their stomachs from unlawful food when breaking their fast – all the while fancying themselves to be good.

Some delude themselves in hajj. They depart for the pilgrimage without compensating for iniquities done to their fellow man, repaying their debts, or seeking lawful provision. While journeying, they skip their prayers and can't muster up the effort to purify their clothing or body. They pay their taxes to tyrannical rulers – and they do all this [for an optional hajj], after they have performed their required hajj.

Some pray diligently – but only behind the prayer leader in their town mosque, and they respond only to his call for prayer. They hold that only he is in the right. If someone else leads prayer or sounds the call to prayer in his absence, all hell breaks loose,⁴ even if that person is

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more pious or knowledgeable than their own prayer leader.

Some enjoin others to righteousness but forget their own selves. They command others forcefully, demanding respect and leadership. If they are denied these on the grounds that they are wrong, they become enraged and say, 'It is my job to assess you, so how can you deny me this?' Their true motive is to gain leadership.

Some master the religious sciences. They plunge deeply into them and busy themselves with this while losing sight of protecting their own bodily limbs from sin and forgetting to perform acts of worship. They neglect to efface vices and evils from their own hearts. They are deluded by their knowledge and presume they have a high station with Allah. They think they have reached the peak of knowledge, and that Allah could not possibly chastise someone like them. They even offer their own intercession to people, believing that they are so dear to Allah that they will not be held accountable for their own sins.

Some delight in themselves. They feel that they are immune to any undesirable traits. They feel that they are too elevated before Allah for him to afflict them with these traits, and that He would only afflict them on laypeople.

When their delusions of grandeur and royalty, and their quest for elevation and prestige, are exposed, they say, 'We were not being arrogant. We were pursuing honour for the sake of the faith, showing off the prestige of our knowledge to aid the religion of Allah in the face of those who oppose it.' Whenever jealousy moves them to speak ill of their contemporaries or critics, they refuse to

believe they are jealous and say, 'We are angry for the sake of truth; we are refuting the wrongdoers' enmity and injustice.' But if other scholars are insulted, they do not get angry about it; they may even be pleased!

When he shows off, he justifies it and says, 'Never! The only reason that I am showing off my knowledge and deeds is so people will follow me to be guided to the religion of Allah and saved from His chastisement.' He does not even consider it presumptuous when he does not feel pleased when people follow someone else although he feels pleased when they follow him. If his motive were truly the salvation and wellbeing of the people, he would be pleased with the prospect of their salvation, regardless of whose hand it lies in. Spurred on by Satan, he may also say, 'I only do this so that when they are guided because of me, I will have the reward for it. So my pleasure lies in Allah's reward and not in the popularity in people's eyes.' This is what he erroneously believes about himself, but Allah knows what is in his heart.

Some engage themselves in dialectics and opinionated argumentation and retorting against antagonists. They believe that people's deeds only count if they have faith, and that their faith is void unless they learn to argue with it and with what they call 'proofs of the tenets of their beliefs'. They presume that there is no one more knowledgeable about Allah and His attributes than them, and that anyone who does not adhere to their school of thought and does not learn their type of knowledge is not a believer. Each one of their sects propagates its own sect, whereas the Prophet (S) said,

No people ever go astray after having been guided unless they delve into argumentation and prohibit good deeds.⁵

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ما ضلّ قوم قط بعد هدى، إلا أتوا الجدل وحرّموا العمل.

Some engage themselves in preaching; the best of them speak about the moral virtues of the soul and the characteristics of the heart, such as fear and hope, patience and gratitude, and their likes. They believe that by speaking about these virtues and encouraging people to uphold them, they themselves are automatically adorned with them. However, before Allah, they are devoid of them, and possess only the basic amount of these qualities, which most Muslims possess anyway. Truly wise people test themselves with regard to these qualities, and sincerely work for them, and they do not content themselves with merely embellishing themselves with these superficially.

Some presume that Allah will judge his servants the way a person is judged in a court of justice – using deception to defend their rights, twisting and misrepresenting their statements, deceiving by means of appearance, and judging erroneously. An example of this is their fatwa that when a woman relinquishes her right to her dowry from her husband, then, before Allah, her husband is absolved of his responsibility to give it. This is wrong, because the husband might have been mistreating his wife, making life difficult for her, or behaving badly with her so that she was forced to ask him for a divorce and forced to give up her dowry to be free of him. True, she is giving it up against her own accord. Allah says in the Qur'an:

But if they remit any of it [their dowries] of their own accord... (4:4)

Consent of the self is different from the consent of the heart. The heart may wish for something that the self is

not pleased with – like when someone with all his heart wants to undergo blood-letting, although his self abhors it. It should only be considered to have been given of her own accord if she does not relinquish it out of necessity.

A similar case is when someone is asked for money in front of other notable people, and he gives it because he is ashamed to refuse in front of others, although he would have preferred to be asked in private so that he could refuse. He is giving out of fear of others' reproach. To ask someone something in a situation when they would either be embarrassed or show off is a blow to the heart, and, to Allah, there is no difference between a physical blow and a moral blow, as the physical and moral are the same to Him. Similarly, it is forbidden to accept blackmail given to stop someone from spreading evil talk or slander about the giver.

The Sufis

One group of self-deluded people called 'Sufis' (*ahl al-dhikr wa al-tasawwuf*) claim they are immune from affectation and artifice. They wear ragged cloaks and sit in circles, coming up with *dhikrs* to remember Allah and singing poems. They say 'there is no god but Allah', but they do not follow the path of learning and attaining true understanding [of Him]. They concoct chants and wails and fashion dances and forms of clapping. They have plunged headlong into temptation and have embraced innovation (*bid'ah*) instead of the Sunnah. They raise their voices in abominable shrieks, screeching beseechingly.

Others claim to have mystical knowledge. They claim to have witnessed Allah – with their own eyes – and that they can cross beyond the Praiseworthy Station (*al-*

maqam al-mahmud),⁶ although they may only know these concepts by name. They take advantage of the tragedies that befall unassuming people to intone certain words as if they were heavenly revelation and inspiration. They look down on lay worshippers and scholars with contempt. They say the laypeople are tiring themselves for a wage, and the scholars are veiled from conversing with Allah. They claim to perform miracles that even a favoured prophet would not claim, although they boast neither sound knowledge nor refined actions. The savage, uncultured masses flock to them from every corner – more than flock to Mecca for the pilgrimage. They crowd around them, hanging on to every word. They may even prostrate to them, as if they are worshipping them, kissing their hands and falling at their feet. They do this out of their own vain desires, because they make concessions in dubious matters. They eat alongside them like animals, not caring whether their food is lawful or unlawful. They gorge themselves on the sweets the people give them, and destroy their religion and the people's in the process:

That they may bear their entire burdens on the Day of Resurrection, along with some of the burdens of those whom they lead astray without any knowledge. (16:25)

Wealthy people

Some wealthy people are eager to build mosques, schools, shelters for the poor, bridges, and whatever else people can clearly see, using wealth they have not earned lawfully and engraving their names on plaques so their memory will live forever and their name will remain after death. They – erroneously – believe they deserve forgiveness for that and that they are sincere in their

actions, but if any of them is asked to spend a single dinar on something his name will not be written on, he finds it extremely difficult to give and cannot allow himself to do so. Allah is aware of what he does – whether he inscribes his name or not. Were he to seek to please Allah instead of the people, he would never miss the opportunity to spend on the poor – in his town or a nearby town – as this is more important than building and adorning mosques.

Others give charity to the poor and destitute, seeking huge gatherings to do it in so the poor – who typically thank those who give to them and spread word of their generosity – would thank them in public. They hate to give charity in secret, and if a poor person whom they were charitable towards does not advertise their generosity, they see it as betrayal and ingratitude.

Some cling to their wealth, stingily keeping it to themselves, and occupy themselves with acts of worship that do not require spending, such as fasting in the day, praying at night, and reciting the entire Qur'an – thinking they are in the right.

Others will not spend on anything except the obligatory alms-tax. When they pay that, they only give away undesirable, useless things. They only give to the poor who serve them and who persist in asking them for aid, all the while believing they have fulfilled their obligation before Allah.

There are innumerable types of people who delude themselves.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says,

A person who is deluded is wretched in this world, and duped in the next because he has sold what is better for what is baser. Do not

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admire yourself, for sometimes you may be deceived by your own wealth and your physical health into supposing that you will last forever. You may equally be deceived by your long life, your children, and your friends, into thinking that you will be saved by them. Sometimes you are deceived by your situation, your intention, and your affliction that bring you your hopes and desires so easily that you think that you are truthful and successful in achieving your goal. You may even be deceived by the regret you show people for your shortcomings in worship, but Allah knows the opposite of that is in your heart. You delude yourself into worshipping in a spirit of reluctance, but Allah desires sincerity. At times you feel proud of your knowledge and your lineage, heedless of the hidden gems of Allah's knowledge. Sometimes you imagine that you are calling on Allah when you are actually calling on another. You may even imagine that you are giving good counsel to people, while your real motive is selfish in wanting them to incline towards you. Sometimes you criticize yourself when you are in actual fact praising yourself.

Know that you will only emerge from the darkness of delusion and false ambition by sincerely turning in repentance to Allah and humbling yourself before Him, and by acknowledging the flaws in yourself that are not consistent with reason and knowledge, and which the faith, the law and the customary practices of the Holy Prophet and the Imams of guidance do not tolerate. And if you feel content with your present condition, then there is no one more wretched than you in knowledge and action, nor anyone with a more wasted life, for which you will inherit grief on the Day of Resurrection.⁷

المغرور في الدنيا مسكين، وفي الآخرة مغبون، لانه باع الافضل بالادنى، ولا تعجب من نفسك، حيث ربما اغتررت بمالك وصحة جسدك لعلك تبقى. وربما اغتررت بطول عمرك واولادك واصحابك لعلك تنجو بهم. وربما اغتررت بمالك وبنيك واصابتك مأمولك وهواك، وظننت انك صادق ومصيب. وربما اغتررت بما تري الخلق من الندم على تقصيرك في العباداة، ولعل الله تعالى يعلم من قلبك بخلاف ذلك. وربما اقامت نفسك بالعبادة متكلفا والله يريد الاخلاص. وربما افتخرت بعلمك ونسبك، وانت غافل عن مضمرات ما في علم الله. وربما توهمت انك تدعو الله وانت تدعو سواه. وربما حسبت انك ناصح للخلق وانت تريد لهم لنفسك ان يميلوا إليك. وربما

ذممت نفسك وانت تمدحها في الحقيقة. واعلم انك لن تخرج من ظلمات الغرور والتمني، الا بصدق الانابة الى الله، والابخات له، ومعرفة عيوب احوالك من حيث لا توافق العقل والعلم، ولا يحتمله الدين والشريعة، وسنن القدوة وائمة الهدى، وان كنت راضيا بما انت فيه، فما احد اشقى بعملك منك واضيع عمراً، فأورثت حسرة يوم القيامة .

Notes

¹ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 354.

² Ibid.; al-Tusi, *al-Amali*, p. 541.

³ They erroneously believe that the reason why they have been bestowed with bounties in the world is because they deserve it, or because Allah owes it to them, and they will similarly be blessed even more in the Hereafter. This is the meaning of deluding oneself with respect to Allah. This story is told in greater detail in the Holy Qur'an in Surat al-Kahf.

⁴ Lit. 'it is as if the Resurrection has begun'.

⁵ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 368

⁶ This is a privileged station, described in Qur'an 17:79 as being a reward for one who stands vigil engaged in prayer during the night.

⁷ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 142.

FOURTH TREATISE

Cultivating Noble Moral Virtues

In it are six books...

1. The first part of the document is a list of the names of the members of the committee who have been appointed to the various sub-committees. The names are listed in alphabetical order of the last name.

2.

3. The second part of the document is a list of the names of the members of the committee who have been appointed to the various sub-committees. The names are listed in alphabetical order of the last name.

4. The third part of the document is a list of the names of the members of the committee who have been appointed to the various sub-committees. The names are listed in alphabetical order of the last name.

❖ Patience ❖

Introduction

Patience is steadfastness in the face of desire, as is required by religion. Patience is always required in laborious situations – such as worship – as well as in times of distress. Its opposites are anguish and impatience, manifested by persistent complaining, raising one's voice, striking one's cheeks, and tearing one's clothes.

Patience over the desires of the stomach and the private parts is called chastity, as opposed to voracity. Patience of wealth is called responsibility, as opposed to recklessness. Patience during war is known as courage, as opposed to cowardice. Patience in swallowing anger is known as temperance, as opposed to rage. Patience over calamities and misfortunes is known as optimism and hopefulness, as opposed to dejectedness, vexation, and weariness. Patience in matters that require discretion is called secrecy, as opposed to disclosing things. Patience over superfluous wealth is known as abstinence, as opposed to greed.

The angels – who aid the party of Allah – support the religious impulse, and the devils – who aid the enemies of Allah – support the whims. If, with the help of the angels, the religious impulse overpowers the whims and keeps them at bay through constant combat, the patient will be

victorious. But if this side slackens and weakens in the face of whims and does not persevere in repelling them, then it is overtaken by the forces of the devils. Steadfastness comes only as a result of the strength of true knowledge, also known as faith, and it is conviction in the fact that the whims are a sworn enemy to the path of Allah.

Allah describes the patient ones in many ways and repeatedly commends patience in the Qur'an. He attaches great rewards and levels of goodness to it and its fruits. He, Mighty and Exalted, says:

And amongst them We appointed imams to guide [the people] by Our command, when they had been patient and had conviction in Our signs. (32:24)

And your Lord's best word [of promise] was fulfilled for the Children of Israel because of their patience. (7:137)

And We will surely pay the patient their reward by the best of what they used to do. (16:96)

Those will be given their reward two times for their patience. (28:54)

Indeed the patient will be paid in full their reward without any reckoning. (39:10)

Thus, the reward for every single action that is a source of nearness to Allah is subject to evaluation and reckoning, except for patience. He has also promised the patient ones that He is with them:

And be patient; indeed Allah is with the patient. (8:46)

Furthermore, He has juxtaposed victory with patience:

Yes, if you are steadfast and God-fearing, and should they come at you suddenly, your Lord will aid you with five thousand marked angels. (3:125)

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Furthermore, He has combined various rewards for the patient ones, the like of which He has not combined for others. He says:

And give good news to the patient – those who, when an affliction visits them, say, ‘Indeed we belong to Allah, and to Him do we indeed return.’ It is they who receive the blessings of their Lord and [His] mercy, and it is they who are the [rightly] guided.’ (2:157)

An investigation into all the verses that deal with patience would be lengthy indeed.

The Prophet (S) said,

Patience is half of faith.¹

الصبر نصف الإيمان.



The very least of what you have been given is conviction and the resolution to be patient. Whoever has been a given a share of these two things will never have to worry about missing the night prayer or a fast in the day.²

من أقل ما أوتيتم اليقين وعزيمة الصبر، ومن أعطي حظّه منهما لم يبال ما فاتته من قيام الليل وصيام النهار.



Patience is one of the treasures of Paradise.³

الصبر كنز من كنوز الجنة.



Patience is to faith like the head is to the body. No one can have a body without a head, and no one can have faith without patience.⁴

الصبر من الإيمان بمنزلة الرأس من الجسد، ولا جسد لمن لا رأس له ولا إيمان لمن لا صبر له.

When asked what constitutes faith, the Prophet (S) replied,

Patience and tolerance.⁵

سُئِلَ النبي (ص) عن الإيمان فقال: الصبر والسماحة.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

Faith is built on four pillars: conviction, patience, striving, and justice.⁶

بُنِيَ الإيمان (الاسلام خ) على أربع دعائم: اليقين والصبر والجهد والعدل.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Whoever does not adopt patience will crumble before the adversities of time.⁷

من لا يعد الصبر لنوائب الدهر يعجز.



Paradise is encircled by trials and perseverance, so whoever perseveres in the trials of this world will enter Paradise. And Hell is encircled by pleasures and desires, so whoever gives in to his base self's desires and pleasures will enter Hell.⁸

الجنة محفوفة بالمكاره والصبر، فمن صبر على المكاره في الدنيا دخل الجنة، وجهنم محفوفة باللذات والشهوات فمن أعطى نفسه لذتها وشهواتها دخل النار.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Any of the believers who is tried with an affliction that he bears patiently will have the reward of a thousand martyrs.⁹

من ابتلي من المؤمنين ببلاء فصبر عليه كان له مثل أجر ألف شهيد.



Allah blessed a certain people, but they did not thank Him, so they were cursed. Another people was afflicted with adversities but bore them patiently and persevered, so they were blessed with bounties.¹⁰

إن الله تعالى أنعم على قوم فلم يشكروا فصارت عليهم وباءاً، وابتلى قوماً بالمصائب فصبروا فصارت عليهم نعمة.

The narrations about the virtues of patience are innumerable.

Types of patience

Know that, in life, the servant of Allah encounters two types of circumstances in this life: those that suit his whims, and those that he detests. Since he needs patience in both these situations, he must never be without it.

The circumstances that his whims like, such as good health, wellbeing, wealth, status, a large family, ample means, numerous followers, supporters and friends, and all other such pleasures of this world necessitate an even greater degree of patience. The reason being that if he does not restrain himself from freely indulging in them and becoming immersed in these pleasures, which albeit are permissible, they will lead him to wantonness and rebellion if left unchecked, for 'indeed man becomes rebellious when he considers himself without need' (96:6-7). A mystic said that a believer can be patient in the face of tribulation, but only a veracious man (*siddiq*) can be patient in the face of good times, because it requires will-power and self-restraint from something easily accessible. A hungry man is much more able to be patient in the absence of food rather than when delicious and delectable dishes are placed in front of him and he must exercise self-restraint.

As for those circumstances that do not suit his whims, they either come about by his own choice – such as acts of worship or keeping away from sins – or else he faces them with no choice, such as trials and tribulations. He may have no choice in being afflicted by them in the first place, but may subsequently choose to remove them, such

as ridding himself of a troublesome person by taking revenge.

These circumstances, therefore, fall into three categories.

1. Those that he has a choice over, including all actions that can be described as either acts of obedience or of disobedience.

Exercising patience with regard to acts of obedience is difficult, because the lower self by nature seeks to escape servitude and craves lordship for itself, as we elaborated earlier. Additionally, a person may dislike acts of obedience due to laziness, such as in the case of the daily prayer; or due to miserliness, such as giving charity – or even due to both, such as going for hajj or fighting jihad. Patience in acts of worship, therefore, entails persevering with difficult things, and the obedient servant [of Allah] will need to exercise this patience in three instances.

Firstly, before the act itself, in redressing his intention and sincerity from being tainted by showing off or pride; secondly, during the action, ensuring that he does not become heedless of Allah during his action, nor become lazy in fulfilling its due etiquettes and recommendations, and that he remains steadfast thus until completion of it; and thirdly after completing the action, he needs to exercise self-restraint from announcing it to others, from displaying it to boost his reputation, from showing off so that people may look upon him with admiration, and from all other such things that would invalidate his act of worship and nullify his reward.

As for sins, the most difficult type of patience is that

which must be exercised in the face of something that one is accustomed to commit by habit, for habit is second nature, and when added to desire, they become two more forces of Satan against the divine force within, and the religious impulse is not strong enough to combat them. Furthermore, if that particular sin is something that is easy to commit, then patience in the face of it becomes even harder for the lower self, such as restraining oneself from the sins of the tongue, like backbiting, lying, quarrelling, and praising oneself be it subtly or overtly. Or, thoughts speak even easier than the tongue; doubts or worries can pervade the heart (except when the heart is preoccupied and immersed by a matter of religion), to such an extent that even when someone wakes up in the morning, he is plagued by his thoughts. Man's mind either dwells on what has already passed, which he has no control over, or that which is still to come, which is inevitable and destined. Either way, he wastes his time and the precious tool that he has at his disposal, which is his heart. When man's heart is heedless of the remembrance of Allah through which he can get closer to Him, for even the span of a breath, or neglects to think about Him, by which he may arrive at knowing Him, and, hence, loving Him, then he is indeed at a great loss.

2. The second type of unpleasant circumstances that man faces are those that are out of his control when afflicted by them, but which he subsequently has a choice in repelling, such as if he was to be hurt by an action or speech, or either his person or his property is attacked in some way. Patience, in this case, would be

to abandon retaliation. Allah says in the Qur'an:

Surely, we will put up patiently with whatever torment you may inflict upon us, and in Allah let the trusting ones put all their trust. (14:12)

And be patient over what they say, and ignore them in a graceful manner. (73:10)

You will surely be tested in your possessions and your souls, and you will surely hear from those who were given the Book before you and from the polytheists much affront; but if you are patient and God-fearing, that is indeed the steadiest of courses. (3:186)

The Prophet (S) said,

Reconcile with the one who has cut you off, give to the one who has denied you, and forgive the one who has wronged you.¹¹

صل من قطعك، وأعط من حرمك، واعف عن من ظلمك.

3. The third type of circumstances are those that, from beginning to end, are not within man's jurisdiction; and these are tribulations that he is afflicted with, such as the death of a loved one, the destruction of property, and the loss of health through sickness. Patience in the face of these depends on one's conviction.

The Prophet (S) used to supplicate,

I beseech you for conviction that will make the tribulations of this world easy to bear.¹²

أسألك من اليقين ما يهون به علي مصائب الدنيا.

He also said,

No sooner does someone who is afflicted with a tribulation say as Allah has commanded him to say: 'Indeed we are Allah's and to Him do we return. O Allah recompense me for my tribulation and give me better than this thereafter', than Allah does exactly that.¹³

PATIENCE

ما من عبد أصيب بمصيبة فقال كما أمره الله، إنا لله وإنا إليه راجعون، اللهم أجرني في مصيبي واعقبني خيراً منها، إلا فعل الله ذلك.



Allah, Mighty and Exalted, says: 'When I make My servant face a tribulation either in his body or in his property or his children, and he receives it with a graceful patience, then on the Day of Resurrection I will feel too embarrassed to erect a scale for him or to spread open his record of deeds.'¹⁴

قال الله عز وجل: إذا وجهت إلى عبدي مصيبة في بدنه أو ماله أو ولده، ثم استقبل ذلك بصبر جميل إستحييت منه يوم القيامة أن أنصب له ميزاناً أو أنشر له ديواناً.



There are three types of patience: patience in the face of tribulations, patience with acts of obedience, and patience against sins. Whenever someone bears tribulations patiently and gracefully until they are removed from him, Allah writes the reward of three hundred degrees for him, each degree being as vast as the distance between the earth and the sky. And whoever patiently perseveres with acts of obedience, Allah writes for him the reward of six hundred degrees, each degree being as vast as the distance between the earth's core and the Throne. And whoever patiently restrains himself from committing sins, Allah writes for him the reward of nine hundred degrees, each degree being as vast as the distance between the earth's core and the furthest extent of the Throne.¹⁵

الصبر ثلاثة: صبر عند المصيبة، وصبر على الطاعة، وصبر عن المعصية، فمن صبر على المصيبة حتى يردّها بحسن عزائها كتب الله له ثلاث مائة درجة، ما بين الدرجة إلى الدرجة كما بين السماء إلى الأرض، ومن صبر على الطاعة كتب الله له ست مائة درجة، ما بين الدرجة إلى الدرجة كما بين تخوم الأرض إلى العرش، ومن صبر عن المعصية كتب الله له تسع مائة درجة، ما بين الدرجة إلى الدرجة كما بين تخوم الأرض إلى منتهى العرش.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Patience is of two kinds – patience in the face of tribulation is good

and beautiful, but the best type of patience is self-restraint in the face of Allah's prohibitions.¹⁶

الصبر صبران، صبر على البلاء حسن جميل، وأفضل الصبرين الورع عن محارم الله تعالى.

Patience in the face of tribulations

If people were to ask why someone gets rewarded for being patient in the face of tribulation when the matter is not in his control in the first place, and he is compelled to bear it, whether he likes it or not, they must note that the objective here is that there should not be any aversion or disgust towards the tribulation, for that is within one's power to control.

Know that when people are deeply anguished – tearing their clothes, hitting their cheeks, complaining excessively, acting dejected and depressed, and changing their eating and dressing habits – they exclude themselves from the status reserved for the patient, since all this is within their control. They must, therefore, avoid those things and display satisfaction with Allah's decree – continuing to do what they normally do, and believing that whatever was taken away had merely been a deposit left with them which had now been claimed. They must not let the pain in their hearts or their tearful eyes prevent them from being included among the patient, for all of this is part of being human, and people will face these types of things until they die.

Thus, when the Prophet's son Ibrahim, passed away, his eyes filled with tears. Someone asked him, 'Haven't you prohibited us from doing this?' He replied,

This is nothing but compassion, and indeed Allah is compassionate towards His servants who display compassion.¹⁷

PATIENCE

ان هذا رحمة، وانما يرحم الله من عباده الرحماء.

He also said,

The eye may weep and the heart may feel sorrow, but we must not utter that which would displease the Lord.¹⁸

العين تدمع والقلب يحزن ولا نقول ما يسخط الرب.

This would not exclude him from the position of accepting Allah's decree, for someone who undergoes bloodletting or cupping is also accepting of it, though he may feel pain as a result of it, no doubt. The perfection of patience, however, lies in concealing one's pain, sickness, poverty or other such afflictions from others. It has been said that among the treasures of goodness are concealing one's tribulations, pain, and charity.

Imam al-Baqir (A) narrated that the Prophet (S) said,

Allah, the Exalted, says, 'Whenever someone is sick for three days in a row and does not complain to his attendants, I exchange his flesh for new, better flesh; and his blood for new, better blood. If I restore him to good health, I leave him with no sin; and if I take his soul, then I take him up to My mercy.'¹⁹

قال الله تعالى من مرض ثلاثاً فلم يشك إلى عواده، أبدلته لحماً خيراً من لحمه ودماً خيراً من دمه وإن عافيته عافيته ولا ذنب له، وإن قبضته قبضته إلى رحمتي.

Other narrations elucidate the meaning of this narration – saying that the new flesh, blood, and skin are better because the person has not sinned with them. 'Complain' here means that the person should not say things like, 'I'm suffering like no one else before me', or 'This is the worst affliction ever to befall anyone.' Stating facts, such as 'I couldn't sleep last night' or 'I have a fever today' do not count as complaining.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

- ⁸ Ibid., p. 79.
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 96; *Jami' al-Akhbar*, p. 112.
- ¹⁰ al-Kulayni, *al-Kai*, vol. 2, p. 92.
- ¹¹ al-Daylami, *Irshad al-Qulub*, p. 135; al-Harrani, *Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, p. 44.
- ¹² al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 69.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 40; *Jami' al-Akhbar*, p. 111; al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 91.
- ¹⁶ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 91; Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 16; *Kanz al-Fawa'id*, vol. 1, p. 159.
- ¹⁷ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 79, p. 91.
- ¹⁸ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 3, p. 262; al-Harrani, *Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, p. 39.
- ¹⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 3, p. 115.
- ²⁰ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 93.
- ²¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 94.
- ²² al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 123.

❖ Satisfaction with the Divine Decree ❖

Introduction

Satisfaction and gratefulness is to abandon objection and dissatisfaction. Allah says in the Qur'an:

Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. That is the great success. (5:119)

It is narrated that the Prophet (S) once asked a group of his companions,

'Who are you?'

They replied, 'Believers'.

He asked them, 'What is the sign of your belief?'

They replied, 'We are patient in the face of tribulation, we are grateful in times of ease, and we are satisfied with the manifestations of the divine decree.'

He exclaimed, 'Believers indeed, by the Lord of the Ka'bah!'¹

سأل طائفة من أصحابه، ما أنتم؟ فقالوا: مؤمنون، فقال: ما علامة إيمانكم؟ قالوا نصبر على البلاء، ونشكر عند الرخاء، ونرضى بمواقع القضاء، فقال: مؤمنون ورب الكعبة.

In another narration, he is reported to have said,

Wise men and scholars indeed! Their wisdom would almost make them prophets.²

حكماء علماء كادوا من فقههم أن يكونوا أنبياء.

Imam al-Sajjad (A) said,

Patience and satisfaction with [the decree of] Allah is the fountainhead of obedience to Allah. Whenever someone is patient and satisfied with Allah in whatever He has decreed for him, in all that he likes and dislikes, Allah will decree only what is good for him, in all that he likes and dislikes.³

الصبر والرضا عن الله رأس طاعة الله، ومن صبر ورضي عن الله فيما قضى عليه فيما أحب أو كره، لم يقض الله عز وجل له فيما أحب أو كره إلا ما هو خير له.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

The most rightful servant of Allah to submit to Allah's decree is one who knows Allah. When someone is satisfied with Allah's decree, he will benefit from it, and Allah will increase his reward. But when someone is dissatisfied with the decree, it will pass him by, and Allah will reduce his reward.⁴

أحقّ خلق الله أن يسلم لما قضى الله، من عرف الله، ومن رضي بالقضاء أتى عليه القضاء وعظم الله أجره، ومن سخط القضاء مضى عليه القضاء وأحبط الله أجره.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Those who have the greatest knowledge of Allah are the most satisfied with His decree.⁵

إن أعلم الناس بالله أَرْضَاهُمْ بقضاء الله.



Allah once said to Prophet Moses (A): 'O Moses, son of Imran, I have not created any creature more beloved to Me than My believing servant. And I test him with that which is good for him and I withhold from him what is also good for him, and I know best what suits My servant. So let him be patient with my trials, thank Me for my blessings, and be satisfied with My decree, and I will record him among the truthful ones in My proximity if he acts in accordance with My pleasure and obeys My command.'⁶

ان فيما أوحى الله إلى موسى بن عمران: يا موسى ابن عمران ما خلقت خلقاً أحب إليّ من عبدي

المؤمن، وإني إنما أبتليه لما هو خيرٌ له وأزوي عنه لما هو خيرٌ له، وأنا أعلم بما يصلح عليه عبيدي فليصبر على بلائي، وليشكر نعماتي وليرض بقضائي، أكتبه في الصديقين عندي إذا عمل برضائي وأطاع أمري.

Imam al-Kazim (A) said,

One who is conscious of Allah must never think Him to be too slow to provide him, nor accuse Him with respect to His decree.⁷

ينبغي لمن يعقل عن الله أن لا يستبطئه في رزقه ولا يتهمه في قضائه .

The benefit of satisfaction with one's present situation is that it frees the heart for worship, provides tranquillity from worries about the future, and secures Allah's pleasure and salvation from His wrath in the Hereafter, for Allah says:

Whoever is not satisfied with My decree and has no patience with My trials, let him go and find himself another Sustainer besides Me.⁸

من لم يرض بقضائي ولم يصبر على بلائي فليطلب ربا سواي.

The path to attaining satisfaction is to acknowledge that whatever Allah has decreed for a person is in his best interests in his present situation, even if his knowledge cannot fathom the reasoning behind it. There is no room for worrying about it, for it cannot change the decree. Whatever He wills happens, and whatever He does not will does not happen.

Regrets over the past and planning for the future both pass through the blessing of time, so there is no good in dwelling on them when only the consequence of dissatisfaction remains. Rather, love [for Allah] should fill a person with wonderment at the sensation of pain, like a lover or enamoured one feels. Or the very knowledge of the rewards that are to be reaped should render it easy for

him, like an ill man who has to let blood, or a merchant who has to travel. A person must, therefore, entrust all his affairs to Allah, for Allah is all-Observant of all His servants.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

The Prophet (S) never used to utter the words 'if only' with regards to something that had happened in the past.⁹

لم يكن رسول الله (ص) يقول لشيء مضى لو كان غيره.

Love and patience bring about satisfaction

For those who think that there is no other virtue that can combat one's caprice and various other afflictions apart from patience, and they cannot imagine satisfaction as being possible, this comes from their denial of the power of love of Allah. If they acknowledge and imagine the power of one's love for Allah, and how someone can be completely preoccupied with it, then it is no hidden matter that that love can engender satisfaction with the acts of that Beloved. This satisfaction can be of two types.

The first type is that the very sensation of pain ceases where the afflicted one experiences a painful situation but does not feel it. Its wound afflicts him, but he does not sense its torment. The prime example of this is the warrior who, in the midst of his anger or fear, may become wounded, but he does not sense it until he sees the blood which indicates to him that he has been wounded. Similarly one who is preoccupied with a task that is beloved to him may step on a thorn and not feel its pain in his foot because of his heart's preoccupation. This is because when the heart becomes immersed in something, fully faithful to it, it does not know anything else.

Similarly a lover who is immersed in the anticipation of meeting his beloved or in his love may be afflicted by something that would pain or grieve him – were it not for his love. He does not experience any sorrow or pain because of the extreme love that has taken over his heart. This is the case if something external were to afflict him, so imagine if the affliction came from his Beloved! The beauty and might of the Divine Presence is incomparable to any other beauty, and he who is shown even an iota of it is dumbfounded and flabbergasted; he does not know what has overcome him.

The second type is when one feels the pain and acknowledges it, but is satisfied with it, and in fact desires it and wishes for it consciously, even though he may instinctively abhor it. This is like someone who undergoes bloodletting or cupping, for he experiences the pain, but contents himself with it and wants it, ready to bear it with strength. This is the state of satisfaction when anything painful happens to him. And whenever a tribulation afflicts him from Allah, Mighty and Exalted, and he has conviction that the reward that is in store for him as a result of it is much greater than any loss that he will face, he is satisfied with the decree, wishes for it, loves it, and thanks Allah for it.

This is the state of one who takes into account the reward that he will be compensated with, but there are those who are so overcome by their love that their only goal is the Beloved's love and pleasure, nothing else. That thing wherein lies the Beloved's will and pleasure is beloved to him in itself, and sought by him. All this is available to witness in people's love for Allah, and various authors have described these cases extensively in their

compendiums and poetry.

We have some narrations that say how the people of Egypt went without food for four months when there was famine in the land, and they satisfied themselves by looking at the face of Joseph (A). Whenever they felt hunger, they would look at him, and his beauty would preoccupy them from feeling the pangs of hunger. In fact, the Qur'an itself speaks of this even more eloquently¹⁰ where it describes the women who cut their hands when they stared at his beauty in infatuation.

It has also been narrated,

Prophet Jesus (A) once passed by a blind leper, paralyzed on both sides, with his skin peeling off from leprosy, and he heard him say, 'Praise be to Allah, who has saved me from that which so many of His creatures have been afflicted with.'

So Jesus (A) asked him, 'Which affliction is it that you see as having been averted from you?'

He replied, 'O Spirit of Allah, I am better than those in whose heart Allah has not placed the knowledge of Him, as He has placed in my heart'.

He replied, 'You are right. Give me your hand'.

So he took his hand, and lo and behold, he became the most good-looking and most able-bodied of men, and Allah removed all his afflictions from him. He became one of Jesus's companions and worshipped with him.¹¹

يروى أن عيسى (ع) مر برجل أعمى أبرص مقعد مضروب الجنين بفالج وقد تناثر لحمه من الجذام وهو يقول: الحمد لله الذي عافاني مما ابتلى به كثيرا من خلقه، فقال له عيسى (ع): يا هذا، أي شيء من البلاء تراه مصروفا عنك؟ فقال: يا روح الله! أنا خير ممن لم يجعل الله في قلبه ما جعل في قلبي من معرفته، فقال: صدقت، هات يدك فتناوله يده فإذا هو أحسن الناس وجها وأفضلهم هيئة وقد أذهب الله عنه ما كان به، فصحب عيسى (ع) وتعبد معه.

Does asking Allah for something imply dissatisfaction with His decree?

Know that seeking something from Allah does not imply dissatisfaction with His decree. Nor does abhorring sinful acts, nor condemning their perpetrators, nor cutting off the means to such, nor striving to remove their causes through enjoining good and forbidding bad. Some of those who have strayed allege that sins, indecent acts, and infidelity are all part of Allah's decree that He has destined, and so one must be satisfied with them. This is sheer ignorance through misinterpretation, and lack of awareness of the underlying reasons behind the divine law.

Supplication is something that we use to worship Allah. Many supplications have come down to us from the prophets and the Imams (A), even though they had the highest level of satisfaction [with divine decree]. Allah, Mighty and Exalted, praises some of His servants in the Qur'an:

Indeed they were active in [performing] good works, and they would supplicate Us with eagerness and awe and were humble before Us. (21:90)

Call Me, and I will answer you! (40:60)

As for people who deny or refuse to condemn sins (saying that it contradicts satisfaction with Allah's decree), some of His servants use them to worship Him, Mighty and Exalted, and He has condemned them for their satisfaction with this state of affairs:

Indeed those who do not expect to encounter Us and who are pleased with the life of this world and satisfied with it. (10:7)

They are pleased to be with those who stay back, and their hearts

have been sealed. So they do not understand. (9:93)

There is a famous *hadith* that says,

Whoever witnesses a wrongful act being committed and is satisfied with it may as well have committed it himself.¹²

من شهد منكراً ورضى به، فكأنه قد فعله.

In another report, it is narrated,

If a man were to be killed in the east, and another man in the west were satisfied with the killing, then he may as well have been a partner in the crime.¹³

لو أن عبداً قُتل بالشرق ورضى بقتله آخرٌ في المغرب، كان شريكه في قتله.

As for the condemning infidels and corrupt people, the evidence condemning them in the Qur'an and *hadith* literature is innumerable; one *hadith* relates,

The strongest of the ropes of faith is to love for the sake of Allah and to abhor for the sake of Allah.¹⁴

أوثق عُرى الإيمان، الحب في الله والبغض في الله.

Some might say that the verses and narrations that encourage us to be satisfied with Allah's decree contradict those that encourage us to condemn evildoers and sins, and so wouldn't that be dissatisfaction with Allah's decree? How can we reconcile the two while they contradict? How can we be satisfied with something but condemn it at the same time?

In response, know that this is what weak people, unable to decipher the secrets of true knowledge, mistakenly believe. They are led to believe thus so that they remain silent in the face of wrongdoings, fancying themselves to uphold a stance of satisfaction with the decree, and calling it being 'non-judgmental' while in

reality it is pure ignorance.

Satisfaction and condemnation are only diametrical opposites if they apply to one and the same thing, for exactly the same reason. If they apply to a single situation but from different angles, then they are not contradictory. A situation can be such that it is accepted from one angle, and condemned from another. For example, your enemy may die, and he may also be the enemy of a worse enemy who facilitated his killing – so you may abhor his death inasmuch as your enemy's enemy has died, and yet feel satisfied in that your own enemy has perished.

Similarly, acts of wrongdoing have two different angles. On one hand, there is Allah – Mighty and Exalted – His acts, His will, and His decree which we are satisfied with; we submit to the Owner of the Kingdom in the bigger picture and are satisfied with whatever He does. On the other hand, there is the servant [of Allah]; because of his actions or character traits that he adopts, Allah abhors him, condemns him, and distances him. This is the angle that is condemnable and censurable, and there are many examples of such situations that are accepted from one angle, and condemned from another.

It is therefore incumbent upon every servant who loves Allah, Mighty and Exalted, to abhor those whom Allah abhors and envelops with His wrath, even if he has to forcefully display hostility and enmity towards him, by virtue of complying with one's Beloved, in displaying animosity towards one who angers the Beloved and is distanced by Him.

This situation actually combines loving for the sake of Allah, and abhorring for the sake of Allah along with satisfaction with the decree of Allah, and is only an

extension of the secret of divine decree and destiny, which is not a small matter to divulge. And that is that evil and good are both part of the Divine Will, but evil is abhorred and good is accepted and wanted. To divulge any further is not appropriate, so it is better to remain quiet about the matter and observe the etiquettes of the divine law, when it is unnecessary to divulge the secret within it.

Gratitude

Gratitude is to recognize that blessings come from the Bestower of Blessings (*al-Mun'im*), to be joyful at this, and to act in accordance with this joy by cultivating good, praising Allah, and using these blessings to obey Him.

To recognize the source of the blessings, you should acknowledge that all blessings are from Allah, the Exalted. He is the Bestower of Blessings; all intermediaries are at His disposal and are placed by Him. In granting you these blessings, He has given you access to these intermediaries and placed the beliefs and motives in their hearts which compel them to deliver these blessings to you. Whoever acknowledges this must necessarily feel grateful to Allah with all his heart.

Rejoicing in His giving in a state of humility before Him is gratitude in and of itself, just as acknowledging His blessings is also gratitude. If you rejoice in His blessings sincerely – in that you are not happy because of the gift itself, or because of being blessed by it, but rather because it has brought you nearer to Allah – then this is the highest level of gratitude to Him. This type of gratitude is distinguished by the fact that you only feel happy with the world inasmuch as it is a planting ground

for the Hereafter, an aid to securing it; and you are sad about any blessing that diverts you from being thankful to Allah or blocks your path to Him. This too is gratitude from the heart.

Acting according to that joy which comes from acknowledging the Bestower means to undertake to fulfil His will and do what He loves – with the heart, the tongue, and the limbs. With the heart, the grateful person should intend to do good and entertain positive feelings towards all. With the tongue, he should express thanks to Allah by praising Him. With the limbs, he should use Allah's blessings to obey Him and avoid disobeying Him with them. So to be thankful for the eyes, a person must conceal any fault of a fellow Muslim he sees; and to be grateful for the ears, he must conceal any slander that he hears about a fellow Muslim, and so on. All such acts constitute gratefulness for the blessings of these limbs.

Someone who is ungrateful for his eyes is also ungrateful for the sun, for it is through his eyesight that he is able to appreciate it, and they have been created in order to benefit us in our worldly and otherworldly lives; and in order that we may use them to safeguard us from all that harms our two abodes. The whole point of the creation of the earth and the sky, the world and all its means, is for man to use them to assist him in attaining nearness to Allah, and this is only possible through loving Him, seeking intimacy with Him in this world, and keeping away from the vanities of this world. There is no intimacy without constant remembrance of Him, and no love without the knowledge that results from constant reflection about Him, and neither continuous remembrance nor reflection is possible without one's

physical body. And the body only subsists with the aid of the natural elements, which have been created to support and sustain man's physical body. The physical body is only the vehicle for the soul and the soul that will return to Allah is the one that is contented as a result of its continuous obedience and knowledge of Him.

So whoever misappropriates any blessing for something other than obeying Allah is indeed ungrateful for Allah's blessings, and for all the means at his disposal that he uses to facilitate his act of disobedience, for Allah says:

And few of My servants are grateful. (34:13)

Why should Allah punish you if you give thanks and be faithful? And Allah is appreciative, all-knowing. (4:147)

Imam al-Sadiq (A) narrated that the Prophet (S) said,

The man who eats and is thankful for it is rewarded the same as the man who fasts and takes account of himself. And the man who enjoys good health and is thankful for it is rewarded the same as the man who is afflicted and bears it patiently. And the man who has been given abundance and is thankful for it is rewarded the same as the man who is deprived and yet is content.¹⁵

الطاعم الشاكر له من الأجر كأجر الصائم المحتسب، والمعافي الشاكر له من الأجر كأجر المبتلى الصابر، والمعطي الشاكر له من الأجر كأجر المحروم القانع.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) also said,

He who has been given gratefulness is given increase [as a result].¹⁶

من أعطِيَ الشكر أعطِيَ الزيادة.

For Allah says:

If you are grateful, I will surely enhance you [in blessing]. (14:7)

He also said,

Whenever Allah gifts His servant with a blessing and he acknowledges it in his heart and praises Allah with his tongue, as soon as he finishes speaking, [Allah] decrees that he be given more.¹⁷

ما أنعم الله على عبد من نعمة فعرفها بقلبه وحمد الله ظاهراً بلسانه فتمّ كلامه حتى يؤمر له بالمزيد.

Imam al-Baqir (A) narrated that the Prophet (S) was spending the night at 'A'ishah's house, and she said to him,

'O Messenger of Allah, why do you tire yourself out [in prayer] when Allah has forgiven any past or future sin of yours?'

He replied, 'O 'A'ishah, should I not be a grateful servant?'¹⁸

كان رسول الله (ص) عند عائشة ليلتها، فقالت: يا رسول الله لم تتعب نفسك وقد غفر الله لك ما تقدم من ذنبك وما تأخر؟ فقال (ص): يا عائشة ألا أكون عبداً شكوراً.

Imam al-Baqir (A) continued,

The Prophet (S) used to stand in prayer the whole night, so Allah, glory be to Him, revealed the verse, 'Ta Ha. We did not send down to you the Qur'an that you should suffer.' (20:2)¹⁹

وكان رسول الله (ص) يقوم على أصابع رجله، فأنزل الله سبحانه ﴿طه﴾ مَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَىٰ.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Gratefulness for one's blessings is to keep away from prohibited things, and complete appreciation is for a man to say, 'Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.'²⁰

شكر النعم إجتنب المحارم وتمام الشكر قول الرجل: الحمد لله رب العالمين.

He was once asked, 'Is there a criterion for gratefulness which, if the servant fulfils, he can be called grateful?' He replied,

Yes, there is. He must praise Allah for every blessing that is bestowed on him in his family and his wealth. And if he has been granted

wealth, then it is to appropriate it rightfully. Allah, Almighty, says in the Qur'an, 'Immaculate is He who has disposed this for us, and we [by ourselves] were no match for it' (43:13); 'And say, "My Lord! Land me with a blessed landing, for You are the best of those who bring ashore"' (23:29); and 'And say, "My Lord! Admit me with a worthy entrance, and bring me out with a worthy departure, and render me a favourable authority from Yourself."' (17:80)

سئل (ع) هل للشكر حد إذا فعله العبد كان شاكرًا؟ قال: نعم، قيل: ما هو؟ قال: يحمد الله على كل نعمة عليه في أهل ومال وإن كان فيما أنعم عليه في مال حق أداه ومنه قوله سبحانه: ﴿سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ﴾. ومنه قوله: ﴿وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَنْزِلْنِي مُنْزَلًا مُبَارَكًا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ﴾. وقوله ﴿رَبِّ أَدْخِلْنِي مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَأَخْرِجْنِي مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَاجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَصِيرًا﴾.

He has also narrated that when the Prophet (S) encountered something that pleased him, he would said, 'Praise be to Allah for this blessing,' and when he encountered something that distressed him, he would say, 'Praise be to Allah for every situation'.²¹

كان رسول الله (ص) إذا ورد عليه أمر يسره قال: الحمد لله على هذه النعمة، وإذا ورد عليه أمر يغم به قال: الحمد لله على كل حال.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Whenever any of you remembers a blessing of Allah upon you, he should put his cheek on the earth and thank Allah. If he is mounted, then he should descend and put his cheek on the earth. If he is unable to get down in public, then he must place his cheek on his saddlebow, and if he is unable to do that, then he must place it on the palm of his hand, then praise Allah for what He has bestowed on him.²²

إذا ذكر أحدكم نعمة الله فليضع خدّه على التراب شكرًا لله، فإن كان راكبًا فلينزله وليضع خدّه على التراب، وإن لم يكن يقدر على النزول للشهرة، فليضع خدّه على قربوسه، فإن لم يقدر، فليضع خدّه على كفه ثم ليحمد الله على ما أنعم عليه.

Thankfulness itself is a blessing

Know that no one can ever truly reach the limit of thankfulness to Allah except by acknowledging that all blessings are from Allah and that the ability to thank Allah is also a blessing from Allah, for which you would need to thank Him again.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) narrated,

Allah, Mighty and Exalted, said to Prophet Moses (A), 'O Moses, thank Me with the thanks that is due to Me.'

So he replied, 'My Lord, how can I ever thank You with the thanks that is due to You when the very thanks that I express to thank you with is a blessing that You have bestowed on me?'

He, the Exalted, said, 'O Moses, now you have thanked Me properly by acknowledging that that is from Me.'²³

أوحى الله عز وجل إلى موسى (ع): يا موسى أشكرني حق شكري، فقال: يا رب كيف أشكرك حق شكرك، وليس من شكر أشكرك به إلا وأنت انعمت به عليّ؟ قال: يا موسى الآن شكرتني حيث علمت أن ذلك مني.

When Imam al-Sajjad (A) used to recite the verse of the Qur'an, 'If you enumerate Allah's blessings, you will not be able to count them' (14:34), he used to exclaim,

Glory be to Him who has not given anyone full knowledge of His blessings except the acknowledgement that they are incapable of ever truly knowing them, just as He has not allowed anyone to fathom Him more than the mere knowledge that He is unfathomable. To truly thank Him, therefore, is for people to acknowledge their perpetual shortfall at ever being able to truly thank Him. He considers their acknowledgement of their incapacity as thanks in itself, just as the peak of the knowledge of the knowledgeable ones is to submit that they cannot fathom Him, so He makes their faith in Him a knowledge for them that He encompasses all of creation and they cannot go beyond that. Not a single thing that He has created can ever worship Him to the extent that He is due, and how can they

when He has no limit nor can He be quantified in any way – exalted be Allah above all of this.²⁴

كان إذا قرأ هذه الآية ﴿وَإِنْ تُعْذِرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا تُخْصُوهَا﴾ يقول: سبحان من لم يجعل في أحد معرفة نعمة إلا المعرفة بالتقصير عن معرفتها، كما لم يجعل في أحد من معرفة إدراكه أكثر من العلم بأنه لا يدركه، فشكره تعالى معرفة العارفين بالتقصير عن معرفة شكره، فجعل معرفتهم بالتقصير شكراً، كما من علم العالمين بأنهم لا يدركونه، فجعله إيماناً علماً منه أنه قد وسع العباد فلا يتجاوز ذلك، فإن شيئاً من خلقه لا يبلغ مدى عبادته، وكيف يبلغ مدى عبادة من لا مدى له ولا كيف، تعالى الله عن ذلك علواً كبيراً.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

When you rise in the morning and retire at night, say ten times: 'O Allah, every blessing and source of wellbeing that You have made me rise with, be it in my faith or in my worldly affairs, is indeed from You, Alone and without partner. It is incumbent on me to praise and thank You for it, O Lord, until You are pleased with me and more.' If you say that, then you have expressed thanks for what Allah has bestowed on you on that day and that night.²⁵

إذا أصبحت وأمسيت فقل عشر مرات: اللهم ما أصبحت بي من نعمة أو عافية في دين أو دنيا فمنك وحدك لا شريك لك، لك الحمد ولك الشكر بما عليّ يا رب حتى ترضى وبعد الرضا. فإنك إذا قلت كنت قد أدبت شكر ما أنعم الله به عليك في ذلك اليوم و في تلك الليلة.

It is narrated that Noah (A) used to say that every morning when he woke up, which is why he is called 'a thankful servant' [in the Qur'an].²⁶

كان نوح (ع) يقول ذلك إذا أصبح، فسَمِيَ بذلك عبداً شكوراً.

He has also narrated that it is written in the Torah:

Show appreciation to the one who bestows something on you and bestow on one who appreciates you, for blessings never cease when you appreciate them, nor do they remain when you are ungrateful for them. Gratitude enhances blessings and secures them from [the winds of] change.²⁷

وعنه (ع) مكتوب في التوراة: أشكر من أنعم عليك وأنعم على من شكرك فإنه لا زوال للنعماء إذا شكرت، ولا بقاء لها إذا كفرت، الشكر زيادة في النعم وأمان من الغير.

Imam al-Sajjad (A) said,

Indeed Allah, the Exalted, loves every sorrowful heart and He loves every grateful servant. On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will address His servant saying, 'Did you thank so-and-so?' to which he will reply, 'No, but I thanked You, my Lord.' And Allah will reply, 'If you did not thank him, then you have not thanked Me.' He continued, 'The most thankful of you to Allah is the one who is most appreciative of people.'²⁸

إن الله تعالى يحب كل قلب حزين ويحب كل عبد شكور، ويقول الله تبارك وتعالى لعبد من عبيده يوم القيامة: أشكرت فلانا؟ فيقول: بل شكرتك يا رب فيقول: لم تشكرني إذ لم تشكره، ثم قال: أشكركم لله أشكركم للناس.

Blessings are either worldly or spiritual

Know that blessings are either worldly – like a sound physical make-up, delectable pleasures or being averted from scandals and losses – or spiritual, such as Islam itself, having knowledge of the infallible Imams (A), and the divine succour to be able to worship and keep away from sins. Spiritual blessings are more important because they facilitate everlasting bliss and salvation from eternal damnation, and because the disbelievers only have a share in the worldly blessings, while the believers catch the spiritual blessings that the latter pass up.

Imam al-Kazim (A) said,

Whoever praises Allah for a blessing has indeed expressed thanks to Him, and that praise is greater than the blessing itself.²⁹

من حمد الله على النعمة فقد شكره، والحمد أفضل من تلك النعمة.

The path to attaining gratitude is to acknowledge and reflect on Allah's plans, and to look to who or what is below you in this world while setting your sights on what is spiritual and higher. When afflicted with adversity, thank Him that something worse did not happen, and that it was not a test of faith; that it was hastened on in this world instead of saved as a punishment for the Hereafter, and now the reward will be much better; and that it eradicated love of the world from the heart. Adversities are blessings, for they either atone for sins, train the soul, or elevate one's status. Nevertheless, wellbeing is better than adversity.

It is narrated that the Prophet (S), in a supplication of his, used to seek refuge from both the tribulations of this world as well as of the Hereafter.³⁰

He, the prophets, and their successors have all supplicated:

Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and save us from the punishment of the Fire. (2:201)

And they would seek refuge from the malicious joy of enemies.³¹

The Prophet (S) said,

Ask Allah for wellbeing, for a servant cannot receive anything better than wellbeing in this world, apart from conviction.³²

سلوا الله العافية فما أعطي عبد أفضل من العافية إلا اليقين.

By conviction, he meant the wellbeing of the heart from the sicknesses of ignorance and doubt, for the wellbeing of the heart is above wellbeing of the physical body.

Notes

- ¹ Mentioned by Fakhr al-Razi in *Tafsir al-Razi* (n.l.: n.d.), vol. 16, p. 196.
- ² Ibid., p. 316.
- ³ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 60.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 62.
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 60.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 61.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Narrated from the Prophet Muhammad (S) in Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 5, p. 96.
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 63.
- ¹⁰ Holy Qur'an 12:31 'So when they saw him, they marvelled at him and cut their hands [absent-mindedly], and they said, 'Good heavens! This is not a human being! This is but a noble angel!'
- ¹¹ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 320.
- ¹² Ibid., p. 322.
- ¹³ al-Fattal, *Rawdat al-Wa'izin*, p. 461.
- ¹⁴ al-Barqi, *al-Mahasin*, vol. 1, p. 263.
- ¹⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 94.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., p. 95; al-Barqi, *al-Mahasin*, vol. 1, p. 3.
- ¹⁷ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 95.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ al-Mirza al-Nuri, *Mustadrak al-Wasa'il* (Beirut: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt (A) li-Ihya' al-Turath, 1987), vol. 1, p. 128.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid., p. 96.
- ²² Ibid., p. 97.
- ²³ Ibid., p. 98.
- ²⁴ al-Harrani, *Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, p. 205.
- ²⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 99.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Ibid., p. 94.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 99.
- ²⁹ Ibid., p. 96.
- ³⁰ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 125.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² *al-Tarhib wa al-Tarhib*, vol. 4, p. 272.

❖ Hope & Fear ❖

Hope

Hope is the heart's comfort when it anticipates something it loves. If most of the criteria for the realization of that longing are put in place, then that waiting can rightly be called hope – like when someone plants seeds in fertile, well-irrigated soil and then hopes for a good harvest. If, however, the necessary conditions are missing, then waiting is but self-delusion and idiocy – as with someone who plants seeds in barren soil and does not water them. If, however, the person doubts whether the seeds will sprout or not, then that is called wish – as when the soil is fertile but water scarce.

This world is the planting ground for the Hereafter. The heart is like the soil, and faith is like the seeds that are planted in it. Good deeds plough, dredge, and irrigate the soil. The heart becomes negligent, however, and immerses itself in worldly pleasures, which are like a salt marsh on which nothing will grow. On the Day of Resurrection – the harvest day – each person will only reap what he sowed, and the harvest of faith will only come to fruition from the seeds of faith. Rarely does faith flourish in a corrupt heart with bad morals, just as seeds cannot flourish in a salt marsh.

Man must compare his hope of forgiveness, therefore,

to the hope of a farmer when he plants his crop. A farmer seeks out good, fertile land, plants good seeds therein, ploughs the soil, and weeds it from everything that would hamper or spoil the growth of his seeds. He waters it regularly, then sits and waits for the grace of Allah to avert destructive disasters from it until the crop is ready to be harvested – that is called hope.

If he scatters the seeds in a salt marsh or on uneven, raised ground that the rain could not water, and he does not prepare the ground to receive the seeds; and then he sits and waits for a good harvest, then that kind of anticipation would be called stupidity and self-delusion, not hope.

And if he scatters the seeds in fertile soil in a place where there is neither drought nor deluge, but no rain falls – although he eagerly awaited it – his waiting would be called ‘wishing’, not hope.

The word ‘hope’, therefore, can be applied correctly to the anticipation of something positive and beloved, where all the necessary preliminary steps that are under one’s own control have been put in place, and the only thing left is that which is not under one’s control, which is the Grace of Allah in averting calamities and disasters.

When the servant scatters the seeds of faith, waters them with acts of obedience, purifies the heart of the thorns and weeds of vice, and waits for Allah’s grace to stabilize his faith for him until his death and to give him a good end, encompassed in His forgiveness, that waiting is true, commendable hope, for it incites him to work hard and understand everything necessary for his faith to flourish by fulfilling the prerequisites of being forgiven until the end.

If he neglects to water his seeds with acts of obedience, leaves his heart full of the thorns and weeds of vice, plunges into the pursuit of worldly pleasures, and then sits and waits for forgiveness, his wait will be idiotic and self-deluded. Allah says:

Indeed those who have become faithful and those who have migrated and waged jihad in the way of Allah – it is they who hope for Allah's mercy, and Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful (2:218).

Then they were succeeded by an evil posterity which inherited the Book: they seize the transitory gains of this lower world, and say, 'It will be forgiven us.' (7:169).

The Prophet (S) said,

The wise person is the one who lowers his base self and works for what is after death, and the fool is the one whose base self follows his desires and who entertains high hopes from Allah.¹

الكيس من دان نفسه وعمل لما بعد الموت، والاهق من أتبع نفسه هواه وتمنى على الله الأماني.

Someone once came to Imam al-Sadiq (A) and told him,

'A group of people who associate themselves with you are engaged in committing sins, but at the same time saying, 'We hope [in His mercy]'.

He replied, 'They are lying and are not our associates. These are people whose wishes swing them back and forth. One who truly hopes for something works for it, and one who fears something flees from it.'²

قيل للصادق (ع): إن قوما من مواليك يلمون بالمعاصي ويقولون: نرجو، فقال (ع): كذبوا ليسوا لنا بموال، أولئك قوم ترجحت بهم الأماني، من رجا شيئاً عمل له ومن خاف شيئاً هرب منه.

He also said,

A believer is not a believer until and unless he is both fearful and hopeful, and he is not fearful and hopeful until and unless he acts in accordance with that which he fears and hopes.³

لا يكون المؤمن مؤمناً حتى يكون خائفاً راجياً، ولا يكون خائفاً راجياً حتى يكون عاملاً لما يخاف ويرجو.

Therefore, the servant [of Allah] who is diligent in performing good deeds and keeping away from sins deserves to anticipate Allah's Grace to complete His blessing on him by admitting him into Paradise. And if the sinner repents and acknowledges all his excesses and shortcomings, he can rightfully hope for his repentance to be accepted – if he is now averse to sins, upset by misdeeds and pleased with good deeds, and is self-critical and self-reproaching. A person who desperately wants to repent and longs to do so can rightfully hope for divine succour to enable him to repent, for his hatred of sins and his eagerness to obey is a preliminary step to actualize repentance, and hope only comes after the fulfilment of these first steps.

Fear

Fear is an expression of the pain and burning that the heart feels when it anticipates something unpleasant in the future. The intensity of the fear and pain in the heart is in direct proportion to the perception of the causes leading up to the unpleasant or frightful situation. The weaker one's perception of these causes, the weaker the fear is.

Fear of Allah can be due to the true knowledge of Allah and of His Attributes, or it can be due to the servant's excessive treachery and perpetration of sins. It may also come about as a result of both of these causes combined, so that his fear is proportionate to his knowledge of Allah's might, supremacy, and independence, as well as to his own faults and misdeeds. So the person who fears his

Lord the most is the one who knows Him – and the state of his own soul – the most. This is why the Prophet (S) said,

I am the most God-fearing of you all.⁴

أنا أخوفكم لله.

Allah says:

Only those of Allah's servants with knowledge fear Him. (35:28)

This complete knowledge should inflame his heart with a fear that spreads to his body, his limbs, and character. Bodily fear is expressed through paleness, trembling and weeping. It should keep the limbs from perpetrating more sins and confine them to acts of obedience in a bid to remedy past excesses and to prepare for the future. It is said, 'The fearful one is not the one who cries and wipes his tears, but rather the one who abandons that which he fears he will be punished for.' A sage once said, 'He who fears something flees from it, but he who fears Allah flees to Him.' Regarding character, fear should drive a person to hold his vain desires and lusts in contempt.

Sins once beloved now become despicable in his eyes, just like a person despises the honey he once craved when he realizes it is poisonous to him. The desires are burned away through fear, and the heart is subdued and humbled, awed and yielding. Pride, malice, and jealousy vacate it and it becomes a repository for concern and consideration for the danger of his Hereafter. He does not leave it at the disposal of others and he is preoccupied in monitoring himself, evaluating himself, striving and taking account of his every breath and every moment. He takes his soul to task for every step and every word that it utters, such that both outwardly and inwardly he is busy with what he

fears will happen to him.

This is the state of one who is overcome and ruled by fear. The lowest level of fear is the fear whose effects can be seen in one's deeds where it prevents a person from prohibited things. Holding back from prohibited acts out of fear of Allah is called self-restraint. And if someone attains more daily provision than he needs, for example, and he restrains himself from what might border on the unlawful, that is called piety or God-consciousness, for it drives him to abandon that which is unobjectionable for fear that it might be objectionable; and this is veracity in God-consciousness.

Additionally, if he devotes himself exclusively to service (*khidmah*), he will not build [a house] which he does not live in. He will not hoard what he does not consume, nor focus on this world when he knows it will leave him. Nor will he spend even a single breath on something which is not for the sake of Allah. This is veracity (*sidiq*); such a person deserves to be called veracious (*siddiq*). Veracity encompasses God-consciousness, which in turn encompasses piety, which encompasses self-restraint, which is an expression of keeping away from all that is driven by desires, especially since the effect of fear permeates into the hands and feet.

Hope versus fear

Know that action fuelled by hope is more elevated than action fuelled by fear because the closest of Allah's servants to Him are those who love Him most, and love is attained through hope. This is why there are many expressions of desire in the Qur'an and *hadith* based on hope and entertaining a good opinion of Allah. Allah says,

in the Qur'an,

O My servants who have committed excesses against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed Allah will forgive all sins. Indeed He is the All-forgiving, the All-merciful. (39:53)

He has prohibited despair:

Indeed your Lord is forgiving to humankind despite their wrongdoing. (13:6)

And He criticizes a certain group of people:

That misjudgement that you entertained about your Lord ruined you. So you became losers. (41:23)

And you entertained evil thoughts, and you were a ruined lot. (48:12)

The Prophet (S) said,

Allah, Mighty and Exalted, says: 'I am according to My servant's opinion of Me, so let him think of Me whatever he wishes.'⁵

يقول الله عز وجل: أنا عند ظن عبدي بي، فليظن بي ما شاء.



Let none of you die without first entertaining a good opinion of Allah.⁶

لا يموتن أحدكم إلا وهو يحسن الظن بالله.

The Prophet (S) once went to see a man who was undergoing the pangs of death, and asked him,

'How do you find yourself, right now?'

He replied, 'I find myself fearful on account of my sins, yet hopeful of the mercy of my Lord.'

The Prophet (S) said, 'No sooner do these two come together in the heart of a servant in this kind of situation than Allah grants him that which he hopes for and keeps him safe from that which he fears.'⁷

دخل (ص) على رجل وهو في النزاع فقال: كيف تجدك؟ قال: أجدني أخاف ذنوبي وأرجو رحمة

رَبِّي، فقال (ص): ما إجتمعاً في قلب عبد في هذا الوطن إلا أعطاه الله ما رجا وآمنه مما يخاف.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said to a man who had committed abundant sins and whose fear had led him to despair,

O friend, your despair of Allah's mercy is greater than your sins.⁸

يا هذا يأسك من رحمة الله أعظم من ذنوبك.

In traditions about the story of Jacob (A), it is narrated that Allah revealed to him,

Do you know why I separated you from Joseph? Because of your words, 'I fear that the wolf might eat him while you neglect him.' Why did you fear the wolf and not place your hope in Me? And why did you think of his brothers' negligence and not of My protection over him?⁹

ان الله تعالى اوحى اليه (يعقوب)، أتدري لم فرقت بينك وبين يوسف؟ لقولك: إني أخاف أن يأكله الذئب وأنتم عنه غافلون، لم خفت الذئب ولم ترجني؟ ولم نظرت إلى غفلة اخوته ولم تنظر إلى حافطٍ له؟

Imam al-Baqir (A) narrated that the Prophet (S) said,

Allah, the Exalted, says: 'Let the good-doers not rely on their deeds that they perform to attain My reward, for even if they work hard and exhaust themselves their whole lives in My worship, they will still fall short of attaining the crux of My worship to be able to secure My generosity that they seek from Me, the blessings of My Paradise, and the high statuses in My proximity. Instead, let them have trust in My mercy, let them place their hope in My grace, and let them rely on their good opinion of Me, for indeed that is when My mercy will encompass them, and they will attain My satisfaction and forgiveness, and My pardon will envelop them, for I am Allah, the most compassionate, the ever-merciful, and that is what I am known for.'¹⁰

لا يتكل العاملون على أعمالهم التي يعملونها لثوابي، فإنهم لو اجتهدوا وأتعبوا أنفسهم، أعمارهم في عبادتي، كانوا مقصرين غير بالغين في عبادتهم كنه عبادتي فيما يطلبون عندي من كرامتي،

والنعيم في جناتي ورفيع الدرجات العلى في جوارى، ولكن برحمتي فليثقوا، وفضلي فليرجوا، وإلى حسن الظن بي فليطمئنوا، فإن رحمتي عند ذلك تدركهم، ومنى يبلغهم رضواني، ومغفرتي تلبسهم عفوي، فأني أنا الله الرحمن الرحيم وبذلك تسميت.

Imam al-Baqir (A) also related that it was written in the Book of 'Ali (A) that the Prophet (S) delivered this sermon from the pulpit:

By the One whom there is no god but He, a believer is only granted good in this world or the Hereafter due to his good opinion of Allah, his hope in Him, his good-naturedness, and his abstention from backbiting believers. And by the One whom there is no god but He, Allah only punishes a believer after his repentance and seeking of forgiveness because of his bad opinion of Allah, his loss of hope in Him, his ill-naturedness, and his backbiting fellow believers. And by the One whom there is no god but He, no sooner does a believer entertain a good opinion of Allah than Allah [acts] according to the good opinion of His believing servant, for Allah, Who is so kind and in whose Hand is only good, cannot bring Himself to disprove the good opinion and high hopes that the believer has in Him. So have a good opinion of Allah and place your desires in Him.¹¹

قال: وجدنا في كتاب علي (ع) ان رسول الله (ص) قال وهو في منبره: والذي لا إله إلا هو، ما أعطي مؤمن قط خير الدنيا والآخرة إلا بحسن ظنه بالله، ورجاءه له وحسن الخلق (خلقه) والكف عن إغتياب المؤمنين، والذي لا إله إلا هو، لا يعذب الله مؤمنا بعد التوبة والإستغفار إلا بسوء ظنه بالله، وتقصيره من رجائه وسوء خلقه وإغتيابه للمؤمنين، والذي لا إله إلا هو، لا يحسن ظن عبد مؤمن بالله إلا كان الله عند ظن عبده المؤمن، لأن الله كريم بيده الخيرات يستحي أن يكون عبده المؤمن قد أحسن به ظنه، ثم يخلف ظنه ورجائه، فأحسنوا بالله الظن وارغبوا إليه.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

To entertain a good opinion of Allah is to place your hope in none but Him and to fear nothing but your sins.¹²

حسن الظن بالله أن لا ترجو إلا الله ولا تخف إلا ذنبك.

The way to cultivate hope is to remember all previous

instances of Allah's grace in one's life without the need for a mediator, and all that He has promised in terms of rewards without having deserved them, and all the blessings that He bestows in this life and the next without being asked, and the vastness of His mercy in situations which merit His wrath.

The narrations that we have about the vastness of Allah's mercy are innumerable, and there is no need to list them all here, for the ones who need to cultivate that kind of hope are those who are completely overcome by fear or despair, and there are very few such people out there. As for those who are persistent in their wrongdoing, rebellious and intent on sinning, self-deluded about their corruption and error, like the majority of people these days, then hearing these narrations will only incite their rebellion further, and add to their corruption.

Balancing hope and fear

Know that hope is only praiseworthy to a certain extent, but when it goes beyond that to a feeling of security or immunity, then it is a loss:

And no one feels secure from Allah's devising except the people who are losers. (7:99)

Similarly fear is only praiseworthy to a certain extent, but when it goes beyond that into despair, then it is a source of error:

And who despairs of his Lord's mercy except those who are astray? (15:56)

Or it turns into hopelessness, which is faithlessness:

Indeed no one despairs of Allah's mercy except the faithless lot. (12:87)

The best way, therefore, is to be balanced.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said to one of his sons,

My son, fear Allāh in such a way, that even if you were to come to him with the good deeds of all the people on earth He would not accept them from you, and at the same time have such hope in Allāh that even if you were to come to him with the sins of all the people on earth, He would still forgive you.¹³

يا بني خف الله خوفاً ترى أنك إن أتيت به بحسنات أهل الأرض لم يتقبلها منك، وأرج الله رجاءً كأنك لو أتيت بسيئات أهل الأرض غفر الله لك.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

No believer should be devoid of two rays in his heart: a ray of fear and a ray of hope, such that if either one was to be weighed against the other, it would not surpass it.¹⁴

ليس من عبد مؤمن إلا وفي قلبه نوران: نورٌ من خيفة ونور من رجاء، لو وزن هذا لم يزد على هذا.

Allah has combined these two in His description and praise of such people:

Their sides vacate their beds to supplicate to their Lord in fear and hope. (32:16)

And they would supplicate Us with eagerness and awe. (21:90)

Among most people, hope is predominant, and this is due to self-delusion or a lack of true understanding. The best thing for them is to allow awe or fear of displeasing Allah to prevail before death, and at the time of death to let hope and a good opinion of Allah prevail. This is because fear acts as a whip that drives one to act, and at the time of death, the time for action has passed and he can no longer bear the whips of fear, and it may cause his heart to give way and hasten his death. The spirit of hope, however, strengthens the heart at the time of death,

endearing to it its Lord, to whom it looks forward to returning.

No one should leave this world without being in a state of loving Allah and looking forward to meeting Him, for whoever longs to meet Allah, Allah also longs to meet him. And whoever is forthcoming in meeting his Beloved, his joy is heightened in proportion to his love, whereas the trial intensifies for the one who rejects his Beloved.

Therefore, at the time of death, the more man is attached to his love of his family, his children, his wealth, his house, his friends, and his associates, then all of his love is in this world. The world is his Paradise, and death is expulsion from that Paradise, walling him from what he loves. However, if his only beloved was Allah, and there was nothing he loved more than to remember Him, to know Him and to ponder about Him, then this world and its attachments would be mere distractions for him away from his Beloved. The world would be a prison for him, and death would take him to his Beloved, where he could be free from this prison. The peak of salvation and bliss, therefore, is to die while loving Allah, the Exalted.

The two levels of fear of Allah

Know that fear of Allah has two different levels. The first is the fear of His punishment, and this is the fear that the majority of people have. It comes from basic faith in Paradise and Hellfire, and their being the recompense for either obedience or rebellion. Lack of fear or a weakness thereof results from negligence or weak faith, and can be remedied by reminders, exhortations, and reflecting on the terrors of the Day of Resurrection and the various punishments in the Hereafter. It can also be increased by

looking at God-fearing people, associating with them, and taking note of their states; and if that is not possible, then listening to accounts of such people will not go to waste.

The second level, which is higher, is where Allah is feared, or rather the servant fears being distant and veiled from Him. He longs for nearness to Allah, and this is the fear possessed by those who have knowledge ('*ulama*') – those whose hearts truly know Allah and His Attributes that command awe, respect, and fear, and of those who understand the purport of His words:

Allah warns you to beware of Him. (3:28)

O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah with the wariness due to Him. (3:102)

Only those of Allah's servants with knowledge fear Him. (35:28)

Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. That is for those who fear their Lord. (98:8)

The Prophet (S) said,

The fountainhead of wisdom is fear of Allah.¹⁵

رأس الحكمة مخافة الله.

Imam al-Sajjad (A) said in a supplication attributed to him,

Glory be to You – it is strange indeed how a person can know You yet not fear You.¹⁶

سبحانك عجباً لمن عرفك كيف لا يخافك.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Whoever knows Allah fears Allah, and whoever fears Allah, his soul is only too glad to relinquish this world.¹⁷

من عرف الله خاف الله، ومن خاف الله سخطت نفسه عن الدنيا.



Part of worship is to fear Allah, for Allah says, 'Only those of Allah's servants having knowledge fear Him' (35:28). Allah also says, 'So do not fear the people, but fear Me' (5:44), and, 'And whoever is wary of Allah, He shall make a way out for him.' (65:2)¹⁸

إن من العبادة شدة الخوف من الله، يقول الله: ﴿إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ﴾، وقال الله تعالى: ﴿فَلَا تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَخْشَوُا اللَّهَ﴾، وقال: ﴿وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا﴾.



The love of nobility and fame can never exist in the heart of someone who fears Allah and flees towards Him.¹⁹

إن حب الشرف والذكر لا يكونان في قلب الخائف المهارب.



The believer finds himself between two fears: for the sin that has passed; he does not know how Allah will deal with him because of it – and for what is left of his life, and what other such perils he will accumulate on the way. So he wakes up in the morning fearful, and it is only his fear that improves him.²⁰

المؤمن بين مخافتين، ذنب قد مضى لا يدري ما صنع الله فيه، وعمر قد بقى لا يدري ما يكتب فيه من المهالك، فهو لا يصبح إلا خائفا ولا يصلحه إلا الخوف.



The believer is not considered a believer unless he is both fearful and hopeful, and he is not considered fearful and hopeful unless he acts to remedy that which he fears and hopes for.²¹

لا يكون المؤمن مؤمنا حتى يكون خائفا راجيا، ولا يكون خائفا راجيا حتى يكون عاملا لما يخاف ويرجو.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said to Ishaq ibn 'Ammar,

O Ishaq, fear Allah as if you see Him, for even if you cannot see Him, surely He sees you. If you think that He does not see you, then you have disbelieved, and if you know that He sees you and yet you have

the audacity to disobey Him, then you have treated Him as the most insignificant of watchers over you.²²

يا إسحاق خف الله كأنك تراه وإن كنت لا تراه فإنه يراك، وإن كنت ترى أنه لا يراك فقد كفرت، وإن كنت تعلم أنه يراك ثم برزت له بالمعصية فقد جعلته من أهون الناظرين إليك.

And he said,

When someone fears Allah, Allah will make everything else fear him; and when someone does not fear Allah, Allah will make him fear everything else.²³

من خاف الله أخاف الله منه كل شيء، ومن لم يخف الله، أخافه الله من كل شيء.

It is narrated that the Prophet (S) said,

Every single believer who sheds a single tear as small as a fly's head out of fear of Allah, then no sooner will the slightest heat touch his face [on the Day of Resurrection] than Allah will forbid the Fire from ever touching him.²⁴

ما من مؤمن تخرج من عينيه دمعة وإن كانت مثل رأس الذباب من خشية الله، ثم يصيب شيئاً من حر وجهه إلا حرمه الله على النار.



When the heart of a believer trembles out of fear of Allah, his sins shed from him as the leaves shed off a tree.²⁵

إذا أقشعر قلب المؤمن من خشية الله تحأت عنه خطاياه كما يتحاتت (هكذا في الأصل) من الشجر ورقها.

Shaykh al-Saduq relates in *'Ard al-Majalis* that Layth ibn Sulaym said that he heard one of the Ansar saying,

When the Prophet was once taking shade under a tree on an extremely hot day, a man came near, removed his clothes and began to roll around on the hot sand, first scorching his back, and then his stomach, and then his forehead, and so on, all the while saying to himself, 'My soul, experience this, for the punishment that is with Allah is much worse than what I am doing to you.'

The Prophet was watching him as he did this; then the man put on his clothes and came nearer, at which point the Prophet (S) motioned for him to come over, and said to him, 'O servant of Allah, I saw you doing something that I have never seen anyone else do before. What made you do that?'

The man replied, 'Fear of Allah made me do that. I said to myself, "O soul, experience this, for the punishment that is with Allah is much worse than what I am doing to you."'

So the Prophet (S) said, 'You have indeed feared Allah the way He deserves to be feared, and your Lord proudly praises you to the inhabitants of the heavens.' He then turned to his companions and said, 'All those who are present here, come closer to your companion here that he may pray for you all', so they came closer and he prayed for them: 'O Allah, enjoin our affairs upon guidance, make piety our provision and Paradise the place of our return.'²⁶

قال: سمعت رجلاً من الأنصار يقول: بينما رسول الله (ص) مستظل بظل شجرة في يوم شديد الحر إذ جاء رجل فنزع ثيابه ثم جعل يتمرغ في الرمضاء يكوي ظهره مرة وبطنه مرة ووجهه مرة ويقول: يا نفس ذوقي فما عند الله أعظم مما صنعت بك، ورسول الله ينظر إليه ما يصنع، ثم إن الرجل لبس ثيابه ثم أقبل فأومأ إليه النبي (ص) بيده ودعاه فقال له: يا عبد الله! رأيتك صنعت شيئاً ما رأيت أحداً من الناس صنعه، فما حملك على ما صنعت؟ فقال الرجل: حملني على ذلك مخافة الله، فقلت لنفسي: يا نفس ذوقي فما عند الله أعظم مما صنعت بك، فقال النبي (ص): لقد خفت ربك حق مخافته وإن ربك ليباهي بك أهل السماء، ثم قال (ص) لأصحابه: يا معشر من حضر إدنوا من صاحبكم حتى يدعوا لكم، فدنوا منه، فدعى لهم، وقال: اللهم إجمع أمرنا على الهدى وإجعل التقوى زادنا والجنة مأبنا.

The story of Bahlul, the desecrator of graves, is very famous, and quoted in *Kitab al-Safi* within the exegesis of the verse:

And those who, when they commit an indecent act or wrong themselves, remember Allah, and plead [Allah's] forgiveness for their sins – and who forgives sins except Allah? – and who do not persist in what they have committed while they know (3:135).²⁷

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

One day in Iraq, the Commander of the Faithful (A) was leading people in the dawn prayer. When he finished the prayer, he exhorted them, weeping and making them weep out of fear of Allah: 'By Allah, I have known people during the lifetime of the beloved Messenger of Allah (S), who would wake up in the morning and retire in the evening, dishevelled, dusty and empty-stomached, with dark circles under their eyes like a camel rider, staying awake all night prostrating and praying to Allah. They are either on their feet or prostrate on their foreheads, pleading with their Lord to save their necks from the Fire. By Allah, in spite of all their worship, I have seen them fearful and at the same time infatuated.'²⁸

صلى أمير المؤمنين (ع) بالناس الصبح بالعراق، فلما أنصرف وعظهم فبكى وأبكاهم من خوف الله ثم قال: أما والله لقد عهدت أقواماً على عهد خليلي رسول الله (ص)، وأنهم ليصبحون ويمسون شعنا غبراً خضاً بين أعينهم كركب البعير، يبيتون لرهم سجداً وقياماً، يراوون بين أقدامهم وجباههم، يناجون رهم في فكاك رقابهم من النار، والله لقد رأيتهم مع هذا وهم خائفون مشفقون.

In another narration he adds,

It is as if they hear the crackling of the Fire in their ears every time Allah is mentioned in their presence, and they shake the way trees shake, while people slumber unaware.²⁹

كان زفير النار في آذانهم، إذا ذُكرَ الله عندهم مادوا كما يميد الشجر، كأنما القوم باتوا غافلين.

Imam al-Baqir (A) continued,

He [the Commander of the Faithful] was never seen to laugh until he passed away.³⁰

فما رُئي ضاحكاً حتى قبض (ع).

As for the fear or the awe possessed by the angels, the prophets, the saints and the Imams of guidance (A), such as the fear of Mika'il, Gabriel, our Prophet (S), Abraham (A), David (A), John the Baptist (A), Imam al-Sajjad (A), and other such personalities – the narrators of *hadith*

have written accounts of it in their books, and whoever wishes to read further about it should refer to them.

The fearful ones

Know that fear only arises from anticipation of an unpleasant situation. This unpleasant situation can either be unpleasant in and of itself, such as fire. Or it can be unpleasant because it consequently exposes one to something unpleasant, such as when sins are abhorred because they lead to an unpleasant predicament in the Hereafter. Every single person should conceive of an unpleasant situation in his own self, from either one of these categories, to strengthen his sense of anticipation in his heart, until his heart burns as a result of the possible experience of that unpleasant thing. The states of the fearful ones vary according to the nature of the unpleasant situations that they may anticipate in their hearts.

First are those whose hearts are overcome by the fear of something that consequently leads to an unpleasant predicament. Some are overcome by fear of dying before they can repent. Or fear that their repentance may be rejected. Or fear that their resolve to fulfil Allah's rights upon them will weaken. Or fear that their hearts will lose their softness and become hard. Or fear of losing steadfastness. Or fear of becoming habituated to following permissible desires. Or fear of being rejected by Allah because of those good deeds that he felt proud of in front of others. Or fear of recklessness with the abundant blessings that Allah has bestowed on him. Or fear of becoming preoccupied with something other than Allah. Or fear of gradually being tested with His blessings. Or

fear of discovering obstacles to the acceptance of his worship and finding out later that his worship was not counted. Or fear of the consequences of what he has done to people in the form of backbiting, treachery, deception, evil intentions. Or fear of what will happen to him the rest of his life. Or fear of his punishment being hastened in his lifetime and being disgraced before death. Or fear of being deluded by the vanities of this world. Or fear of Allah looking deep into his core at the moment of his weakness. Or fear of death ending his life with an evil end. Or fear of his past sins that he cannot remember anymore.

These are all fears harboured by the gnostics or those who truly know Allah, and each one of them has a special benefit in that it leads one to exercise caution with respect to anything that will expose him to that fear. So for example, one who fears that he will become habituated to a specific pleasure will be careful and wean himself from it before it becomes a habit, and the one who fears that Allah will see his inner core will strive to purify his heart of all negativity.

The fear that overcomes most God-wary people is the fear of an evil end. Since that is restricted, then the best way to proceed towards acquiring inner knowledge is to fear one's past, for indeed one's end branches out from one's past with many paths in between. So the end will reflect that which has already passed and been decreed in the Divine Record.

This is what Imam al-Sadiq (A) alluded to when he said,

The Prophet (S) was giving a sermon to the people. Then he raised his right hand, closed his fist, and asked, 'O people, do you know what is in my hand?'

They said, 'Allah and His Messenger know best'.

He said, 'The names of the inhabitants of Paradise, the names of their fathers and their tribes until the Day of Resurrection.'

Then he raised his left hand. 'O people, do you know what is in this hand?'

They replied, 'Allah and His Messenger know best'.

He said, 'The names of the inmates of the Fire, the names of their fathers and of their tribes until the Day of Resurrection.'

He continued, 'Allah is wise and just. Allah is wise and just. Allah is wise and just – one group in Paradise and one group in Hell.'³¹

خطب رسول الله (ص) الناس، ثم رفع يده اليمنى قابضا على كفه، ثم قال: أتدرون أيها الناس ما في كفي؟ قالوا: الله ورسوله أعلم، فقال (ص): أسماء أهل الجنة وأسماء آبائهم وقبائلهم إلى يوم القيامة، ثم رفع يده الشمال فقال: أيها الناس أتدرون ما في كفي؟ قالوا: الله ورسوله أعلم، فقال: أسماء أهل النار وأسماء آبائهم وقبائلهم إلى يوم القيامة، ثم قال: حكم الله وعدل حكم الله وعدل حكم الله، وعدل فريق في الجنة وفريق في السعير.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) also said,

[On the Day of Resurrection] The felicitous man will be taken on the path of damned ones, and people will exclaim how much he resembles them and will suppose him to be one of them, until he reaches salvation. And the damned one will be taken on the path of the felicitous ones, and people will exclaim how much he resembles them and suppose him to be one of them, until damnation will overtake him. Indeed, whoever Allah decrees for salvation, even if he only stays in this world for the duration of a camel's hiccup, will attain salvation.³²

يُسَلَّكُ بالسعيد في طريق الأشقياء حتى يقول الناس ما أشبهه بهم بل هو منهم، ثم تتداركه السعادة، وقد يُسَلَّكُ بالشقي طريق السعداء حتى يقول الناس ما أشبهه بهم بل هو منهم، ثم يتداركه الشقاء، إن من كتبه الله سعيداً وإن لم يبق من الدنيا إلا فواق ناقة ختم له بالسعادة.

Some are overcome with fear of something that is

unpleasant in and of itself. There are those who are overcome by fear of the pangs of death and their severity. Or fear of the questioning in the grave. Or the punishment in the grave. Or the terrors that they may witness. Or the fear of standing before Allah and feeling ashamed of being exposed, and being asked to account for every little thing. Or fear of the Bridge [outstretched between Heaven and Hell] and its sharpness and how he will cross it. Or fear of the Fire, its chains and fetters and torments. Or fear of being deprived entrance into Paradise or being demoted in its levels. Or fear of being veiled from Allah – and this is the worst of these fears held by the gnostics. That is preceded by the fears held by the worshippers, the ascetics, and the rest of the good-doers.

It is no small fact that the virtue of a thing increases in proportion to how helpful it is in securing eternal felicity and bliss. There is no greater bliss than meeting Allah, and there is no way to attain that except by first cultivating love for Him and intimacy with Him in this world. Love can only be cultivated through inner knowledge, and inner knowledge can only be attained through perpetually thinking about Him. Intimacy can only be had by loving Him and constantly remembering Him. Diligence in the remembrance of Allah, and pondering about Him only comes when the love of this world has first been uprooted from the heart; and that is only uprooted when the vain pleasures and caprices of this world are abandoned. It is not possible to abandon pleasures without first uprooting the desires that lead to them, and there is nothing that can kill one's desire for something faster than the fire of fear.

Fear is, therefore, the fire that burns away desires, and

hence, its virtue is in direct proportion to the desire that it burns up, to the extent that it prevents a person from sins and drives him towards good. Its value may vary according to the various levels and types of fear as we elaborated above.

The causes of an evil end

Know that there are several causes that lead one to an evil end, but they go back to three main causes. The first cause, which is the most common, is that during the throes of death when its terror is glaringly revealed, the heart may be overcome by either doubt or heresy, and one's soul is taken in that state, where a veil comes between him and Allah forever. This brings about perpetual distance and everlasting chastisement. This ensues because the person may have entertained false beliefs about Allah, His attributes and His actions during his life, which were contrary to the truth, either by his own opinion and logic, or by blind following. In any case, during the pangs of death, the truth is disclosed before him and the fallacy of his beliefs is exposed to him, since the state of death is a state where all veils are removed. So this disclosure of the fallacy in his beliefs becomes a cause for him to either reject everything else or to doubt it.

And if it so happens that his soul is taken from him at that very dangerous moment before he has a chance to repent or to turn back to state of basic belief, then he dies on the wrong and his soul leaves him in a state of disbelief. Allah, Mighty and Exalted, says:

And there will appear to them from Allah what they had never reckoned. (39:47)

Shall we inform you about the biggest losers in regard to works? Those whose endeavour goes awry in the life of the world, while they suppose that they are doing good. They are the ones who deny the signs of their Lord and the encounter with Him. So their works have failed. (18:103-105)

The simple-minded ones will not be prone to this danger, and by that, I mean those who believe in Allah, His Messenger and the Last Day as a matter of fact, and that is why it is narrated that most of the people of Paradise will be simpletons, and the reason why we have been restricted from delving into dialectical debate (*kalam*) and philosophical argumentation, and instead have been commanded to suffice ourselves with the outward manifestations of the divine law coupled with the belief in the negation of anthropomorphism. This is because there is great danger to one's faith in delving deeply into Allah's Attributes. Its consequences are dire and its paths difficult, since the intellects are not capable of fathoming Allah's grandeur, and Allah's guidance along with the light of conviction in all that the heart is predisposed to believe in, becomes veiled as a result of the love of this world.

What the so-called researchers talk about with their little and restricted minds is both confusing and contradictory, since the hearts are familiar with that which was planted therein in the beginning of their growth and they remain attached to that. The ideas that people fervently hold on to are the nails that firmly keep their set of beliefs in place, be they inherited or learned from teachers and taken for granted as the best course from a young age. On top of that, people's base natures are obsessed with the love of this world, drawn towards its pleasures, pulled by the neck towards it such that they

are oblivious to all else.

So when the door to debate and argumentation about the nature of Allah and His Attributes is opened using opinion and intellectual rhetoric, as a result of the differences between the debaters, their individual leanings, the contrast in their natural dispositions, and the avid desire in each ignorant person among them to assume the garb of perfection and knowledge of the ultimate truth, their tongues are given free rein to utter whatever occurs to them, which in turn attaches itself to the hearts of those who heed their talk. It is affirmed to them with such conviction that the way to escape from such people's beliefs is completely blocked.

People's safety from this, therefore, lies in occupying themselves with good deeds and to not delve into that which lies outside their capacity, except for those whom Allah has charged with becoming experts in religious knowledge, whom He teaches the underlying interpretation of things, and whose hearts He illuminates with the light of wisdom, and that is the philosopher's stone (lit. 'red sulphur').

The second cause of an evil end is weak faith to begin with, which is then further subjugated by the love of the world in the heart. The weaker one's faith is, the weaker their love for Allah is, and the stronger their love for this world, such that there remains no space for the love of Allah, except in the form of lip-service, which has no effect whatsoever in combating his base self or in steering it away from the path of Satan. This then brings about an indulgence in following the base desires until the heart becomes dark, hard, and black, and in the darkness sins accumulate therein, gradually and constantly exting-

uishing the light of faith until the heart is finally rusted over and sealed.

So when the pangs of death come, any love of Allah that happened to remain weakens even further because of its sense of separation from its beloved world. Since this love was greater than any other, his heart is pained at the thought of being separated from it and blames Allah for it. His inner core shakes and fervently rejects the death that Allah has decreed for him. The danger lies in the fact that hatred for Allah may pervade his heart rather than love, and if this feeling coincides with the departure of his soul at that very moment, then he dies with an evil end to his life. But if anyone finds that their love for Allah exceeds their love of the world, even if they do love the world at the same time, then they are not prone to this feeling of hatred for Allah. And only those who know Allah truly love Him.

Allah says:

Say, 'If your fathers and your sons, your brethren, your spouses, and your kinsfolk, the possessions that you have acquired, the business you fear may suffer, and the dwellings you are fond of, are dearer to you than Allah and His Prophet and to waging jihad in His way, then wait until Allah issues His edict, and Allah does not guide the transgressing lot.' (9:24)

The third cause of an evil end is excessive sinning, even if one's faith may be strong. This is because the reason for committing sins goes back to letting one's desires overpower and take a firm seat in the heart through familiarity with sins, indulging in them and becoming habituated to them. And all that man is attached to and fond of during his life, its memories comes back to his heart at the time of death.

So if, during his life, he was more inclined to good

deeds, then that which will overcome him at the time of death will most likely be a feeling of obedience to Allah. But if he was more inclined to sins, then at the time of death, his heart will be overcome with the sweet memory of those sins. His soul may be taken at that precise moment when he feels a desire for the pleasures of this world or for a particular indulgence into sin. His heart may become attached to that and as a result, he becomes veiled from Allah. As for one who only commits sins from time to time, then he is farther away from this danger.

A person dreams about what he has experienced in his lifetime, and has a certain affinity towards these dreams because they represent what he has experienced during wakefulness. Similarly, the throes of death and the swoon that may overcome him at that time are like sleep. At that time, he will give in to these familiar memories, and his heart may become attached to them. This familiarity may even invoke an indecent or sinful image in his heart, and his soul may then incline to it even as it is being taken from it, and he will die with an evil end, even if the basis of faith remained in him.

Whoever wants to control his thoughts and to be able to avert them from thinking sinful or lustful thoughts at the time of death must ensure that, throughout his life, he strives to control his thoughts by constantly pulling the lower self away from such thoughts and uprooting these base desires from the heart. This is the extent to which he has control over the matter; his control at the time of death will be in proportion to his diligence in pursuing good during his life, and ridding the heart of preoccupations in preparation for his condition during the throes of death. Truly, man dies according to how he

lived, and is resurrected according to how he died, as the narration goes.

In accordance with this, it is narrated that there was once a greengrocer on his deathbed, being encouraged to recite the two declarations of faith (*shahadatayn*), while he was busy counting: five, six, four. His heart was preoccupied with calculating, which is what he was most accustomed to his whole life. What is most dangerous at the time of death, however, is for evil thoughts to pervade the heart. This is the meant of the Prophet's saying,

A man may work to perform the good deeds of those destined for Paradise for fifty years, such that the only thing between him and Paradise is as little as camel's hiccup, then he will die according to that which he has been destined for.³³

إن الرجل ليعمل بعمل أهل الجنة خمسين سنة حتى لا يبقى بينه وبين الجنة إلا فراق ناقة، فيختم له بما سبق به الكتاب.

This camel's hiccup, however, does not include acts that bring about damnation. Rather it refers to those thoughts that may enter the heart like a flash of lightning and agitate it. This is why the gnostics are so fearful of an evil end, because even if man wants to only dream about good things, and felicitous states, and visions of good deeds and acts of worship, he is not able to, even though diligence upon good deeds and decency are things that affect one's dreams. This is because fleeting thoughts and flights of imagination are uncontrollable, even though what you see in your sleep is generally linked to what you experience during wakefulness.

You certainly know that man's deeds are all wasted if his faith is not sound at the time of his last breath, when his soul departs, and to maintain this sound faith in the

midst of these waves of disturbing fleeting thoughts is very difficult indeed. This is why the saying goes, 'Do not be surprised at how someone perished; rather, be surprised at how he remained safe!'

Because of this grave danger, martyrdom is so sought after, by its very nature, and sudden death is abhorred, since there is a probability that one dies suddenly at a time when the heart is overcome by evil thoughts. As for martyrdom, it is an expression of the soul being taken when man is in a state where his heart is free of all else, except for the love of Allah. The love of this world, and his attachments to family, property, and progeny have all vacated his heart, as he would have entered the battlefield after preparing himself to face death. He has nothing but the love of Allah in his heart, and the desire to attain His pleasure, having sold his world for his Hereafter, content with the transaction that Allah has made with him, as Allah says in the Qur'an:

Indeed Allah has bought from the faithful their souls and their possessions for Paradise to be theirs: they fight in the way of Allah, kill, and are killed. A promise binding upon Him in the Torah and the Evangel and the Qur'an. And who is truer to his promise than Allah? So rejoice in the bargain you have made with Him, and that is the great success. (9:111)

Notes

- ¹ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawarir*, vol. 1, p. 235; al-Tusi, *al-Amali*, p. 541.
- ² al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 68.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- ⁴ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 145.
- ⁵ *al-'Awali*, vol. 1, p. 289; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 156.
- ⁶ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 156.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁸ al-Saduq, *Uyun Akhbar al-Rida*, narrated by Hamid ibn Qahtabah.

⁹ A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary texts of *hadith*. However, the narration has also been mentioned by al-Naraqī in *Jami' al-Sa'adat*.

¹⁰ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 71.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 72

¹³ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 50.

¹⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 67.

¹⁵ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 151.

¹⁶ Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 83, p. 227.

¹⁷ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 68.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 71.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., p. 68.

²³ Ibid.; al-Tusi, *al-Amali*, p. 139.

²⁴ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 152.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ al-Saduq, *Amali al-Saduq*, p. 279

²⁷ Fayd Kashani recounts this story in brief in a footnote in *al-Safi*. He says that this young man, Bahlul, desecrated graves for seven years, removing the shrouds of the corpses, until one day he removed the burial shroud of one of the daughters of the Ansar and raped the corpse. Thereafter, he was overcome by remorse for what he had committed, so he came to the Prophet (S), weeping and grieved. When the Prophet (S) came to know of the gravity of what he had done after he informed him, he could not bear to look at him. The man, despairing, left for a nearby mountain. He fervently worshipped there, wearing rags, and tied up his hands to his neck, all the while calling out, 'My Lord, this is Your servant Bahlul, chained up before you. I ask You by Your Name, Your Majesty, and the greatness of Your Authority: do not thwart my hopes, my Master, and do not reject my supplication, and do not deny me Your Mercy.'

He continued to plead this way for forty days and nights, until the wild animals and beasts of the jungle cried for him too. When forty days had elapsed, he raised his hands to the sky, saying, 'O Allah, whatever You decide to do in my case – if You answer my supplication and forgive my sin, then reveal that to Your Messenger, and if You do not accept my

supplication and do not forgive me, and desire to punish me, then let a fire come now and burn me, or punish me for it in this world and destroy me here, that I may be saved from the humiliation of the Day of Resurrection.'

Allah, the Exalted, revealed to the Prophet the verse: 'And those who, when they commit an indecent act or wrong themselves, remember Allah, and plead [Allah's] forgiveness for their sins - and who forgives sins except Allah? - and who do not persist in what they have committed while they know' (3:135).

So the Prophet (S) went out, reciting it and smiling, asking his companions, 'Who will direct me to where this penitent young man is?'

They showed him where he was, and he made his way towards him with his companions, and saw him standing between two rocks, his hands chained to his neck, his face blackened from the sun, and his eyelids drooping from having cried so much, supplicating, 'My Master, You created me and fashioned me in the best form - I wonder what You will do to me. Will You burn me in the fire or give me refuge near You? O Allah, indeed you have been so kind to me and blessed me with bounties - I wonder what You will do with the end of my life. Will you place me in Your Paradise? Or will you drive me into the Fire? O Allah, indeed my sin is greater than the heavens and the earth, and even greater than Your wide Seat and Your great Throne - I wonder if you will forgive my sin or use it to disgrace me on the Day of Resurrection?'

He continued supplicating thus, weeping, pleading, and putting earth on his head. The animals had surrounded him and the birds were circling above his head, all crying for his cries.

The Prophet (S) approached him, released his hands from his neck, shook off the dirt from his head, and said, 'O Bahlul, be happy for Allah has freed you from the Fire'. Then he turned to his companions, and said, 'This is the way you must atone for your sins, the way Bahlul has atoned for his'. Then he recited to him the verse that Allah, Mighty and Exalted, had revealed to him, and gave him glad tidings of Paradise.

²⁸ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 236.

²⁹ Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 42, p. 248.

³⁰ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 236.

³¹ *al-Mahajjah*, vol. 7, p. 274; al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, vol. 8, p. 308; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 48.

³² *al-Mahajjah*, vol. 7, p. 247; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 148.

³³ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 155.

❖ Love & Intimacy ❖

Introduction

Know that love is the ultimate station, and the apex of all other degrees. There is no station beyond it, apart from its own fruits, such as longing and intimacy. In fact, there is no station before it either, since they are all precursors to love, such as perseverance and asceticism. Although the other spiritual stations are esteemed and valued, the hearts are easily able to conceive of them and have faith in their existence. It is rare, and more difficult, however, to have faith in the love of Allah as a spiritual station, and some scholars have even gone as far as to deny its existence, saying that it does not mean anything apart from diligence in one's obedience to Allah, the Mighty and Exalted.

They claim that true love cannot be experienced without gender and physical form, but by denying love, they end up denying intimacy and longing [for Allah], and the sweet pleasure of conversing with Him, and all other facets and consequences of love, in spite of the fact that the Qur'an, *hadith*, and the accounts of those who loved Allah all express and confirm the reality of the love of Allah, Mighty and Exalted, without the need to explain what it means.

The proofs for the love of Allah in the Qur'an are His

own words:

Should any of you desert his religion, Allah will soon bring a people whom He loves and who love Him. (5:54)

But the faithful have a more ardent love for Allah. (2:165)

Say, 'If your fathers and your sons, your brethren, your spouses, and your kinsfolk, the possessions that you have acquired, the business you fear may suffer, and the dwellings you are fond of, are dearer to you than Allah and His Prophet and to waging jihad in His way, then wait until Allah issues His edict, and Allah does not guide the transgressing lot.' (9:24)

The Prophet (S) said,

No one from among you has truly believed until Allah and His Messenger are more beloved to him than all else.¹

لا يؤمن أحدكم حتى يكون الله ورسوله أحب إليه مما سواهما.

And he said in one of his supplications,

O Allah grant me love for Your love, and love for all those who love You, and love for all that which draws me closer to Your love, and make Your love more beloved to me than cold water.²

اللهم أرزقني حبك وحب من يحبك وحب ما يقربني إلى حبك، وإجعل حبك أحب إلي من الماء البارد.

There is a famous (*mashhur*) narration where Prophet Abraham (A) said to the angel of death when he came to take his soul,

'Have you ever seen a friend [ie. Allah] take the life of His own friend?'

Allah revealed to him, 'Have you ever seen a lover reluctant to meet his Beloved?'

So he replied, 'O angel of death! Take my soul now!'³

قال (إبراهيم ع) لملك الموت اذ جاء لقبض روجه: هل رأيت خليلاً يمت خليفه؟ فأوحى الله

إليه هل رأيت محباً يكره لقاء حبيبته؟ فقال: يا ملك الموت الآن فأقبض.

When Moses (A) was communing with Allah, Allah told him,

O son of 'Imran, the one who claims to love Me and yet when night befalls him, he goes to sleep away from me, is a liar indeed. Does not every lover love to be alone with his Beloved? O son of 'Imran, I watch My beloved servants – when night befalls them, the eyes in their hearts turn to Me, and they see My chastisement as if before their very eyes, and they beseech Me as if they see Me, and they talk to Me as if in My presence. O son of 'Imran, from your heart, give Me your humbleness, and from your body your obedience, and from your eyes your tears in the darkness of the night, and you will indeed find Me very close.⁴

يا بن عمران، كذب من زعم أنه يحبني فإذا جثته الليل نام عني، أليس كلّ محب يحب خلوة حبيبته؟ ها أنا ذا يا بن عمران مطلع على أحبائي، إذا جثتهم الليل حولت أبصارهم إلى من قلوبهم، ومثلت عقوبي بين أعينهم، يخاطبوني عن المشاهدة ويكلموني عن الحضور، يا بن عمران: هب لي من قلبك الخشوع، ومن بدنك الخضوع، ومن عينك الدموع في ظلم الليل فانك تجدني قريباً.

It has also been narrated,

Jesus (A) once came across three people whose bodies had wasted away, and whose faces had become pale. So he asked them, 'What has turned you into this state that I see you in?'

They replied, 'Fear of the Fire'.

He said, 'Allah will surely keep the fearful safe.'

Then he continued on his way, and met three other people who were even more emaciated and pale, so he asked them, 'What has caused you to become like this?'

They replied, 'Longing for Paradise'.

He said, 'Allah will surely give you what you long for.'

Then he continued on his way, and met three other people who were the most emaciated and whose faces had undergone the most change,

such that they were as mirrors reflecting light. So he asked them, 'What has turned you into the state that I see you in?'

They replied, 'The love of Allah, Mighty and Exalted'.

So he exclaimed, 'You are indeed the ones brought near to Him, you are the ones close to Him.'⁵

مرّ (عيسى ع) بثلاثة نفر قد نخلت أبدانهم وتغيرت ألوانهم فقال لهم: ما الذي بلغ بكم ما أرى؟ فقالوا: الخوف من النار، فقال: حق على الله أن يؤمن الخائف، ثم جاوزهم إلى ثلاثة أخرى فإذا هم أشدّ نحولا وتغيرا فقال: ما الذي بلغ بكم ما أرى؟ قالوا: الشوق إلى الجنة، قال: حق على الله أن يعطيكم ما ترجون، ثم جاوزهم إلى ثلاثة أخرى، فإذا هم أشدّ نحولا وتغيراً كأنّ على وجوههم المرايا من النور، فقال: ما الذي بلغ بكم ما أرى؟ قالوا: حب الله عز وجل، فقال: أنتم المقربون.

It is narrated in *'Ilal al-Shara'i'* that our Prophet (S) said,

Jethro [Shu'ayb] (A) used to cry so much out of his love for Allah, Mighty and Exalted, that he lost his eyesight, and Allah restored it to him. Then he cried again until he lost his sight, and Allah restored it back again, and again a third time round.

When it was the fourth time, Allah revealed to him: 'O Jethro, until when will you continue to do this? If it is out of fear of the Fire that you cry thus, then know that I have given you refuge from it; and if it is out of longing for Paradise, then I have given you entrance into it.'

He replied, 'My God and My Master, you know well that I neither cry out of fear for the Fire nor longing for Paradise. Rather love for You has attached itself to my heart and I cannot bear not being able to see You'.

So Allah, Exalted be His Honour, revealed to him, 'If that is the case, then I will place My servant, Moses son of 'Imran, into your service.'⁶

إنّ شعيب ع بكى من حب الله عز وجل حتى عمى، فرد الله عليه بصره، ثم بكى حتى عمى فرد الله عليه بصره، فلما كانت الرابعة أوحى الله إليه يا شعيب إلى متى يكون هذا أبداً منك، إن يكن هذا خوفاً من النار فقد أجرتك، وإن يكن شوقاً إلى الجنة

فقد أبحثك، فقال: إلهي وسيدي أنت تعلم أني ما بكيت خوفاً من نارك ولا شوقاً إلى جنتك، ولكن عقد حبك على قلبي فلست أصبر أو أراك، فأوحى الله جل جلاله، أما إذا كان هذا هكذا فمن أجل هذا سأخدمك كليمي موسى ابن عمران.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said in one of his supplications,

Suppose, My God, My Master and My Lord, that I was able to bear Your chastisement, but how would I be able to bear separation from You?⁷

فهني يا إلهي وسيدي ومولاي وربي، صبرت على عذابك فكيف أصبر على فراقك.

His son, the chief of martyrs, al-Husayn (A) said in his supplication of the Day of 'Arafah,

You are the One who removes other loves from the hearts of Your beloved ones so that they may neither love nor turn to anyone else apart from You...O One who has made His beloved servants taste the sweetness of His intimacy, so they stand before Him, beseeching Him for more.

أنت الذي أزلت الاغيار عن قلوب أحبائك حتى لم يحبوا سواك ولم يلجأوا الى غيرك...يا من أذاق أحبائه حلاوة الموانسة فقاموا بين يديه متملقين.

Imam al-Sajjad (A) said,

By Your Honour, I love you with a love whose sweetness is rooted in my heart, and my soul has become attached to its glad tidings, and it is impossible that in return for my devotion to You the pathways to Your Mercy should be blocked before my avowal of my love for You.⁸

وعزت لك لقد أحبيتك محبة إستقرت في قلبي حلاوتها، وأنست نفسي بشارتها، ومحال في عدل أفضيتك أن تسد أسباب رحمتك عن معتقدي محبتك.

Imam al-Sajjad (A) prayed in the whispered prayers attributed to him,

My God,

LOVE & INTIMACY

place us among those
within the gardens of whose breasts
the trees of yearning for Thee have taken firm root
and the assemblies of whose hearts
have been seized by the ardour of Thy love!

إلهي فاجعلنا من الذين ترسخت أشجار الشوق إليك في حدائق صدورهم، وأخذت لوعة محبتك
بمجامع قلوبهم.



Join us to Thy servants, those who hurry to Thee swiftly, knock
constantly at Thy door, and worship Thee by night and by day,
while they remain apprehensive in awe of Thee! Thou hast purified
their drinking places, taken them to the objects of their desire,
granted their requests, accomplished their wishes through Thy
bounty, filled their minds with Thy love, and quenched their thirst
with Thy pure drink. Through Thee have they reached the pleasure
of whispered prayer to Thee, and in Thee have they achieved their
furthest goals....

Thou art my object, none other;
to Thee alone belongs my waking and my sleeplessness.

Meeting Thee is the gladness of my eye,
joining Thee the wish of my soul.

Toward Thee is my yearning,
in love for Thee my passionate longing,
in inclining toward Thee my fervent craving.

Thy good pleasure is the aim I seek,
vision of Thee my need,
Thy neighbourhood my request,
nearness to Thee the utmost object of my asking.

In whispered prayer to Thee
I find my repose and my ease.

With Thee lies the remedy of my illness,
the cure for my burning thirst,
the coolness of my ardour,

the removal of my distress.

Be my intimate in my loneliness,
the releaser of my stumble,
the forgiver of my slip,
the acceptor of my repentance,
the responder to my supplication,
the patron of preserving me from sin,
the one who frees me from my neediness!

Cut me not off from Thee
and keep me not far from Thee!

O my bliss and my garden!
O my this world and my hereafter!

والحقنا بعبادك الذين هم بالبدار اليك يسارعون، وبابك على الدوام يطرقون، وإياك في الليل والنهار يعبدون، وهم من هيبتك مشفقون، الذين صفيت لهم المشارب وبلغتهم الرغائب.

قال: وملأت لهم ضمانهم من حبك، ورويتهم من صافي شراب ودك، فبك الى لذيت مناجاتك وصلوا، ومنك اقصى مقاصدهم حصلوا. ثم قال: فقد انقطعت اليك همتي، وانصرف نوحك رغبتني، فانت لا غيرك مرادي ولك لا سواك سهري وسهادي، ولقاؤك قرّة عيني ووصلك مني نفسي، واليك شوقي وفي محبتك ولهي، والى هواك صبايتي ورضاك بغيتي، ورؤيتك حاجتي وجوارك طلبتي، وقربك غاية مسألتي وفي مناجاتك روحي وراحتي، وعندك دواء علتي وشفاء غلتي وبرد لوعتي وكشف كربتي. ثم قال: ولا تقطعني عنك ولا تباعدني منك، يا نعيمي وجنتي ودنياي واخريتي.



My God,
who can have tasted the sweetness of Thy love,
then wanted another in place of Thee?
Who can have become intimate with Thy nearness,
then sought removal from Thee?

My God, place us with him
whom Thou hast
chosen for Thy nearness and Thy friendship,

LOVE & INTIMACY

purified through Thy affection and Thy love,
given yearning for the meeting with Thee,
made pleased with Thy decree,
granted gazing upon Thy face,
shown the favour of Thy good pleasure,
given refuge from separation from Thee and Thy loathing...
whose heart Thou hast captivated with Thy will,
whom Thou hast picked for contemplating Thee,
whose look Thou hast made empty for Thee,

O God,
place us among those
whose habit is rejoicing in Thee and yearning for Thee,
whose time is spent in sighing and moaning!
Their foreheads are bowed down before Thy mightiness,
their eyes wakeful in Thy service,
their tears flowing in dread of Thee,
their hearts fixed upon Thy love,
their cores shaken with awe of Thee....

O He
the lights of whose holiness
induce wonder in the eyes of His lovers,
the glories of whose face
arouse the longing of the hearts of His knowers!
O Furthest Wish of the hearts of the yearners!
O Utmost Limit of the hopes of the lovers!
I ask from Thee love for Thee,
love for those who love Thee,
love for every work which will join me to Thy nearness,
and that Thou makest Thyself more beloved to me
than anything other than Thee

إلهي من ذا الذي ذاق حلاوة محبتك فرام منك بدلاً، ومن ذا الذي أنس بقربك فابتغى عنك
حولاً، إلهي فاجعلني ممن اصطفتيه لقربك وولائتك وأخلصته لودك ومحبتك، وشوقته إلى لقائك
وارتضيته بقضائك، ومنحته النظر إلى وجهك، وحبوته برضاك وأعدته من هجرتك وقلالك. ثم قال:
وهيئت قلبه لإرادتك، واجتبته لمشاهدتك، وأخليت وجهه لك، وفرغت فؤاده لحبك، ثم قال:
اللهم اجعلنا ممن دأبهم الارتياح إليك والحنين، وديدهم الزفرة والأنين، وجباههم ساجدة

لعظمتك، ودموعهم سائلة من خشيتك، وقلوبهم معلقة بمحبتك، وأفتدقهم منخلعة من هيبتك. يا
من أنوار قدسه لأبصار محبيه رائقة، وسباحات نور وجهه لقلوب عارفيه شائقة، يا منتهى قلوب
المشتاقين، ويا غاية آمال المحبين. أسألك حبك وحب من يحبك وحب كل عمل يوصل إلى قربك،
وأن تجعلك أحب إليّ مما سواك.



My God,
how agreeable for hearts are
the thoughts inspiring Thy remembrance,
how sweet
travelling to Thee through imagination
upon the roads of the unseen worlds,
how pleasant
the taste of Thy love,
how delightful
the drink of Thy nearness!

إلهي ما ألدّ خواطر الإلهام بذكرك على القلوب، وما أحلى المسير إليك بالأوهام في مسالك
الغيوب، وما أطيب طعم حبك، وما أعذب شرب قربك.



My God,
nothing will...
cool my burning thirst but reaching Thee,
quench my ardour but meeting Thee,
damp my yearning but gazing upon Thy face,
settle my settling place without closeness to Thee,
allay my worry but Thy repose,
cure my illness but Thy medicine,
eliminate my grief but Thy nearness,
heal my wound but Thy forgiveness,
remove the rust on my heart but Thy pardon,
banish the confusing thoughts from my breast but
Thy command!⁹

وغلتي لا يردّها إلا وصلك، ولوعتي لا يطفئها إلا لقاءك، وشوقي إليك لا يبلّغه إلا النظر إلى وجهك، وقراري لا يقرّ دون دنوّي منك، وهففي لا يردّها إلا روحك، وسقمي لا يشفيه إلا طبّك، وغمّي لا يزيله إلا قربك، وجرحي لا يُبرئُه إلا صفحك، ورين قلبي لا يجلوّه إلا عفوك، ووسواس صدري لا يزيحه إلا أمرك.

There are too many supplications like these to be listed here.

It is related that the Commander of the Faithful [‘Ali ibn Abi Talib] (A) said,

Allah is a drink for His close friends. When they drink of it, they are intoxicated. When they are intoxicated, they are enraptured. When they are enraptured, they are happy. When they are happy, they are overcome with grief. When they are grieved, they become sincere. When they are sincere, they seek [Him]. When they seek [Him], they find [Him]. When they find [Him], they reach [Him]; and when they reach [Him], they connect with Him so that there is no distance between them and their Beloved.¹⁰

إنّ الله تعالى شراب لأوليائه، إذا شربوا سكروا وإذا سكروا طربوا، وإذا طربوا طابوا وإذا طابوا ذابوا وإذا ذابوا خلصوا وإذا خلصوا طلبوا، وإذا طلبوا وجدوا، وإذا وجدوا وصلوا، وإذا وصلوا إتصلوا، وإذا إتصلوا لا فرق بينهم وبين حبيبهم.

Love after true knowledge and understanding

Know that the word ‘love’ expresses an inclination towards something desirable, and this love only comes after knowledge and understanding of that thing, either through one’s senses or through the heart. The greater one’s knowledge of it, the more intense the delight in it, and the stronger is one’s love for it. Inner insight is stronger than outward eyesight, and similarly, the heart is better than the eyes at fully comprehending something. Also, the beauty of meanings perceived by the intellect is

far greater than the beauty of outward forms seen by the eyes. Therefore, the pleasure of the hearts in grasping divine and lofty principles, which are beyond the perception of the eyesight, is definitely more complete and more wholesome, and, as a result, the inclination of a sound disposition and a reasonable mind towards these is stronger.

Therefore, no one can deny the love of Allah except those who are restricted by their own lowly levels that do not allow them to fathom anything beyond their five senses. Just as man loves himself and his own perfection, and would love eternal existence for himself, and just as he loves others for his own self, to enhance his own perfection and permanence, so can he also love another for its own sake, and not for any gain that he can procure from it aside from its own nature. Its nature is the very object of the love, and this is what is known as true and complete love that can be depended upon.

This is just like love for beauty and goodness, for every thing of beauty is beloved to the one who perceives it, and that goes back to the beautiful thing itself, because the act of perceiving something beautiful is pleasurable in and of itself, independent of anything else. Do not presume that the love of an object of beauty is inconceivable unless there is some motive for the fulfilment of some desire. The fulfilment of desires is another pleasure entirely, for which one may like an object of beauty, but the perception of that object of beauty is an independent pleasure, and can be loved for itself.

How can this fact be denied when greenery and flowing water are both much loved, not so that the water can be drunk and the herbage eaten, or for some other

profit to be gained thereof, except for beholding that scene. The Prophet (S) used to love greenery and flowing water. Sound dispositions feel fulfilled when taking in the sight of bright skies, flowers, chirping birds, beautiful colours, well-balanced and well-proportioned works of art, so much so that man's anxieties can be relieved just by looking at these scenes, not seeking to gain anything else beyond the look.

Goodness and beauty, however, are not limited to that which the eye can see, nor to the wonders of creation, for one can say: what a beautiful voice, what a wonderful character, or this is excellent knowledge, or this is good practice, and none of these things are visually perceptible. Furthermore, goodness and beauty are not restricted to the five senses either, for many good virtues are perceived by the insight. The clue to this is the fact that people of sound disposition are automatically drawn to the love of the prophets and the Imams (A), even though they may never have seen them. A man's love for the leader of his school of thought may exceed all bounds and make him go as far as to give away all his wealth to support the cause of that creed and to defend it from all threats with his own life if anyone were to defame his leader.

All good characteristics go back to knowledge and power, both of them being beloved by nature and imperceptible to the senses, so when people ascribe generosity to Hatim and courage to 'Ali (A), the hearts love them and incline towards them necessarily, and this occurs independently of any tangible picture or form and any gain to be had from loving them. And when someone's insight is stronger than his outward senses, his love for inner spiritual meanings is greater than his love

for external meaning.

Know also that every lover either loves himself or loves another, and his love for something else is either because of the beauty or goodness of that thing, or because of its virtue and perfection, or because of an affinity that exists between the lover and the beloved.

Love for one's own self is the strongest and greatest because love is always proportionate to the extent of one's harmony with and one's knowledge of something, and there is nothing more harmonious with someone than his own self, nor does he know anyone better than he knows himself. This is why the knowledge of oneself has been made the key to attaining the knowledge of one's Lord, for the very existence of each individual is an extension and a shadow of the existence of his Lord. So the love of one's self goes back to the love of one's Lord, even if the lover does not feel it.

As for the love of another being for its goodness, its beauty, its virtue, or its nearness to Allah as the ultimate perfection, that is because beauty is beloved in and of itself, whether it is external beauty in form or inner spiritual beauty; and the same goes for perfection. Allah is the Beautiful in Himself, and Perfection in Himself, and everything that is pleasant originates from His Beauty, and every expression of perfection is but a branch from His perfection. So each person, therefore, ultimately loves his own Creator, but He is hidden from him behind the faces of other lovers and the veils of intermediary causes.

The same thing can be said for loving another due to their virtue, for virtue is also loved in and of itself, whether its effects extend to the lover or not. And there is no virtue save from Allah, and no source of virtue apart

from Him, Exalted be his Praise, for He is the Creator and possessor of virtue, and the one who has made its causes and consequences, and every virtuous person is but an act of the Goodness of His Power, and the goodness of His Acts are but a drop in the oceans of His Perfection and Grace.

As for loving another being because of a harmony or affinity between them, that is because birds of a feather¹¹ flock together, whether the common ground between them is tangible, like when a young boy is attracted to other young boys because of their youth; or whether it is a subtle harmony, like when two people are drawn together without any notice of beauty, desire for wealth, or status. Our spirits are pre-mobilized groups in that they are mutually attracted to other spirits that they are in harmony with, and they mutually repel those that they clash with.

This love is a branch of the love for one's own self, which in turn goes back to the love of Allah as you know. So from every aspect, the link to every object of love is Allah, except that only His close friends and beloved servants know this; as the chief of martyrs, Imam al-Husayn (A), indicated in his supplication on the Day of 'Arafah:

You are the One who removes other loves from the hearts of Your beloved ones so that they may neither love nor turn to anyone else apart from You.¹²

وأنت الذي أزلت الأغيار عن قلوب أحبائك، حتى لم يحبوا سواك ولم يلجأوا إلى غيرك.

So glory be to the One who is veiled from the sights of the blind, possessive of His own Beauty and Exaltedness, imperceptible to all but those who have been deservedly

granted goodness from him, those who have been distanced from the anguish of such a veil. He has left the losers to wander in the darkness of their own blindness, grazing haphazardly in the pastures of the sensory and physical pleasures of animals:

They know just an outward aspect of the life of the world, but they are oblivious of the Hereafter (30:7).

The loftiest and greatest of all pleasures

Know that the loftiest and greatest of all pleasures is the true knowledge of Allah and to behold His noble Countenance. For someone who has been denied this knowledge, the pleasure of it cannot even be imagined, and that is because pleasures are consequences of perceptions. Man is a compound of various faculties and impulses, and every faculty and impulse has a particular pleasure that it inclines towards in order to fulfil the requirement for the very nature for which it has been created. The impulse of anger, for example, has been created for self-defence and justice, so its pleasure, no doubt, lies in victory and justice. The desire for food has been created so people might procure provision to survive; so its pleasure, of course, lies in consuming food.

In the heart, there is a faculty known as insight or inner vision, also known as the light of faith or conviction, through which the realities of all things are comprehended. So the fulfilment of its nature lies in gaining understanding and knowledge. Knowledge is one of the most important attributes of Lordship, and is the peak of all perfection. This is why man feels especially pleased inside himself when he is praised as being knowledgeable or intelligent, because when he hears that

praise, he gets a sense of his own perfection and the beauty of his knowledge. As a result, he feels pleased with himself and derives pleasure thereof.

Know also that the knowledge of agriculture and stitching is not the same as the knowledge of ruling a kingdom, nor is the knowledge of grammar and poetry the same as the knowledge of Allah, His Attributes, His angels, and the divine realms of the heavens and the earth. Rather the pleasure of knowledge is directly proportionate to the distinction of that knowledge. And the distinction of knowledge is, in turn, proportionate to the distinction of the known object. So from all knowable things, the knowledge of the loftiest, most perfect, most noble, and greatest from among them is surely the most pleasurable, delightful, and distinct of all of them.

I wonder if there is anything in the whole of existence more beautiful, loftier, more distinct, and more perfect than the Creator of all things, their Perfecter, their Nurturer, the one who originated them and restores them, the one who orders them and arranges them. It must be acknowledged, therefore, that the pleasure of truly knowing Allah is stronger than all other pleasures for those who have been endowed with the faculty of understanding. And whoever knows Allah knows that the pleasures that are linked to various desires are all incorporated within this one pleasure, as the poem goes:

My heart had various different desires,
Which all came together when my eye beheld You
Such that he who I used to envy now began to envy me
So I became the master of mere mortals when You became Master
over me.

I left the people to their world and their religion

Too preoccupied with Your remembrance, O my religion and my world!

The impossibility of physically beholding Allah

Know that there is no difference between seeing in this world and seeing in the Hereafter, in that just as it is impossible to physically see Allah with one's eyes in this world's life, so it will be impossible to see Him in the Hereafter with the physical eyes. And just as it is possible to see Him with the eyes of the heart and the inner sight for those who have such insight or the peak of disclosure and clarity where they have transcended into being able to witness and meet Him, so it is possible to see Him thus in this world's life in this essence.

The veil that exists between Him and His creation is nothing but ignorance and lack of understanding, and not a physical veil, for the close friends of Allah witness Him in this world in all their states, in all aspects of their conduct, at night as well as during the day, as Allah says in the Qur'an:

Those who have faith in Allah and His apostles – it is they who are the truthful and the witnesses with their Lord. (57:19)

Allah bears witness that there is no god except Him – and [so do] the angels and those who possess knowledge— maintainer of justice. (3:18)

Except those who are witness to the truth and who know. (43:87)

He has called them 'witnesses' because they witness Him in their every state, as He Himself, Mighty and Exalted, mentions in the Qur'an:

To Allah belong the east and the west: so whichever way you turn,

there is the face of Allah! (2:115)

He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden, and He has knowledge of all things. (57:3)

He has described Himself as The Manifest, and says:

There is no secret talk among three, but He is their fourth [companion], nor among five but He is their sixth, nor less than that, nor more, but He is with them wherever they may be. (58:7)

When the friends of Allah comprehend the meanings of these verses, they are able to witness Him with the eyes of their hearts.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) was once asked,

‘Do you see your Lord when you worship Him?’

He replied, ‘Woe be to you! I do not worship a Lord that I cannot see.’

He was asked, ‘And how do you see Him?’

He replied, ‘The eyes cannot perceive Him with their physical sight, but the hearts see Him through the realities of faith.’¹³

سُئِلَ أمير المؤمنين (ع): هل رأيت ربك حين عبادته؟ فقال: وملك ما كنت أعبد رباً لم أره، قيل: وكيف رأيته؟ قال: وملك لا تدركه العيون في مشاهدة الأبصار، ولكن رأته القلوب بحقائق الإيمان.

The chief of martyrs, Imam al-Husayn (A) said,

How can You be deciphered through that which depends on You for its very existence? Can anything other than You possess physical manifestation while You supposedly lack it and it presumes to highlight Yours? When have You ever been absent to warrant needing something to point to You? And when have You ever been distant that traces should need to lead to You? Blind is the eye that cannot see You while You watch it, and lost is the deal of the servant to whom You have not apportioned a share of Your love.¹⁴

كيف يُستدلُّ عليك بما هو في وجوده مفتقر إليك؟ أ يكون لغيرك من الظهور ما ليس لك حتى

يكون هو مظهر لك؟ متى غبت حتى تحتاج إلى دليل يدل عليك؟ ومتى بعدت حتى تكون الإثارة هي التي توصل إليك؟ عميت عين لا تراك ولا تزال عليها رقيباً، وخسرت صفقة عبد لم تجعل له من حبك نصيباً.

You have introduced Yourself to all things so nothing can be ignorant of You, and, You make Yourself known to me through all things so I see You manifest in everything, as You are the one who makes all things manifest.¹⁵

تعرفت لكل شيء فما جهلك شيء. وقال أيضاً: تعرفت إليّ في كل شيء فرأيتك ظاهراً في كل شيء، فأنت الظاهر لكل شيء.

Of course, the clarity of the disclosure can increase in the Hereafter in proportion to the purity and clarity of the hearts, and their emancipation from all worldly attachments.

Shaykh al-Saduq, may he rest in peace, narrated on the authority of Abu Basir from Imam al-Sadiq (A):

I once asked him (A), 'Tell me about Allah, Mighty and Exalted – will the believers be able to see Him on the Day of Resurrection?'

He replied, 'Yes, and they have already seen Him before the Day of Resurrection.'

So I asked, 'When?'

He replied, 'When He asked them: Am I not your Lord, and they replied: Yes.'

Then he was silent for some time, and continued, 'Indeed the believers see Him in this world's life before the Day of Resurrection – do you not see Him right now?'

Thereupon Abu Basir asked him, 'May I be your ransom, shall I narrate this (to others) on your authority?'

He replied, 'No, because if you narrate it, some ignorant rejecter will only belie it and twist the meaning of what you are saying, and assume it to be anthropomorphism and heresy. The sight of the heart

is not like the physical sight of the eyes. Allah transcends the descriptions of the anthropomorphists and heretics.¹⁶

قلت له: أخبرني عن الله عز وجل هل يراه المؤمنون يوم القيامة؟ قال: نعم وقد رأوه قبل يوم القيامة فقلت متى؟ قال: حين قال لهم ألسن بربكم قالوا بلى ثم سكت ساعة ثم قال: وإن المؤمنين ليرونه في الدنيا قبل يوم القيامة، ألسن تراه في وقتك هذا؟ قال أبو بصير: جعلت فداك، ألا أحدث بما عنك؟ فقال: لا فإنك إذا حدثت به فأنكره منكراً جاهلاً بمعنى ما تقول ثم قدر أن ذلك تشبيه وكفر، وليست الرؤية بالقلب كالرؤية بالعين، تعالى الله عما يصفه المشبهون والمُلهدون.

By 'anthropomorphists and heretics', he was referring to the followers of al-Taymi and al-'Adwi who believed that Allah could be seen with the physical eyes in the Hereafter even if not in this world, and that the believers would see Him on the Day of Resurrection with their eyesight as clearly as they see the full moon.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) was once asked what we believe with regards to being able to see Allah. He replied,

The brightness of the sun is only a seventieth part of the light of the Divine Chair, and the brightness of the Divine Chair is only a seventieth of the brightness of the Throne, and the brightness of the Throne is only a seventieth of the brightness of the Veil, and the Veil's brightness is only a seventieth of the brightness of the Curtain of Light. So if they really and truly want to see Allah, let them fill their eyes with the brightness of the sun in a cloudless sky.¹⁷

الشمس جزء من سبعين جزء من نور الكرسي، والكرسي جزء من سبعين جزء من نور العرش، والعرش جزء من سبعين جزء من نور الحجاب والحجاب جزء من سبعين جزء من نور الستر، فإن كانوا صادقين فليملؤوا أعينهم من الشمس ليس دونهما سحب.

How to attain the love of Allah

Know that the path to attaining and strengthening the love of Allah, and subsequently being able to witness Him and meet Him, is through acquiring true knowledge and

understanding of Him, and to strengthen that. That only comes about through purification of the heart from the preoccupations and attachments of this world, complete devotion to Allah by way of remembrance and reflection, and then removal of any other love apart from Allah from the heart. The heart is like a container that has no room for vinegar, for example, if it is not emptied of water first. And Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his chest.

Perfect love is to love Allah with all one's heart, and no sooner does he turn to anything other than Allah, then that corner of his heart is preoccupied with other than Allah. The love of Allah diminishes from his heart in accordance with the extent of his preoccupation with anything other than Allah, unless his attention towards something else is by virtue of the fact that it is a creation of Allah, or an act of Allah, or one of the manifestations of Allah's Names.

This exclusivity and stripping away of all else is what is referred to in the Qur'anic verse, 'Say, "Allah!" Then leave them' (6:91). This is only possible when one is overcome with yearning; it is a refinement of any clarity that one has attained thus far, and an intense yearning for that which remains to be attained.

The yearning can be of the type where it is attached to the quest for something unknown, as well as something known, but usually it is restricted to one of the two types. It is an infinite feeling since there are infinite levels to any clarity that is attained within his heart, and what remains to be discovered about Allah's Beauty and Majesty has no bounds. The more clarity he attains therein, the more his longing develops into a sweet pleasure without pain.

Yearning, or longing, therefore never subsides, especially since there are so many levels to uncover. Allah says in the Qur'an:

Their light will move swiftly before them and on their right. They will say, 'Our Lord! Perfect our light for us, and forgive us!' (66:8).

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says,

He who yearns [for the divine] desires neither food, nor finds pleasure in drink. Neither is he quickly excited, nor is he intimate even with his close friends. Nor does he find refuge in a house, nor does he dwell in the midst of the city, nor wear soft garments, nor take rest enough for his need.

He worships Allah night and day, hoping to reach the object of his yearning, and converses with Him in secret with the tongue of yearning, declaring what is in his innermost being. This is as Allah said of Moses when he met his Lord, 'and I hastened to You, my Lord, that You may be pleased.' (20:84).

The Holy Prophet explained his state as follows: 'He neither ate, nor drank, nor slept, nor desired any of these in his comings and goings for forty days, out of his yearning for his Lord.'

So when you enter the arena of yearning, then declare that Allah is greater than everything for yourself and your desires in this world. Bid farewell to all familiar things, and turn from all except the One you desire most. Declare '*Labbayk*' ('Here I am, at Your service') between your life and your death - 'At Your service, Allah, at Your service!' Then Allah will greatly enhance your reward. A yearning person is like a man drowning: his sole concern is to be saved, and he forgets everything else apart from that.¹⁸

المشتاق لا يشتهي طعاما، ولا يلتذ بشراب، ولا يستطيع رقادا، ولا يأنس حميما، ولا يأوي دارا، ولا يسكن عمراناً، ولا يلبس لئناً، ولا يقرّ قراراً، ويعبد الله ليلاً ونهاراً، راجياً أن يصير إلى ما اشتاق إليه، ويناجيه بلسان شوقه معبراً عما في سريرته، كما أخبر الله عزّ وجلّ عن موسى (ع) في معياده ربه بقوله: وعجلت إليك ربّ لترضى، فسّر النبي (ص) عن حاله أنه ما أكل ولا شرب ولا نام ولا اشتهى شيئاً من ذلك في ذهابه ومجيئه أربعين يوماً شوقاً إلى ربه، فإذا دخلت ميدان الشوق

فكبر على نفسك ومرادك من الدنيا، ودع المألوفات وأحرم عن سوى مشوقك وكب بين حياتك وموتك، لييك اللهم لييك وأعظم الله تعالى أجرك.

There are many narrations about yearning for Allah – too many to list here. The supplications of the infallible Imams quoted previously gives a fair indication of their intent.

The degrees of love and their effects on the soul

Know that when man is overcome with a feeling of needing to see beyond the veils of the unseen to gaze upon the ultimate Beauty, and feels his incapacity in being able to look upon the peak of Majesty, there springs forth in his heart a need and a feeling of disquiet that agitates him. This state of disquiet is called yearning, and is usually directed at something unseen.

When a man is overcome with joy at feeling a sense of nearness to Allah, and witnessing His presence as a state that results from disclosure (*kashf*), his gaze is still fixed upon the divine beauty that has been disclosed to him, and that he can behold in the immediate present. After what he is beholding inspires this joy in his heart, he cannot turn his attention to anything else that he has yet to discover. This joy is known as intimacy.

When his gaze is concentrated upon Allah's attributes of might, needlessness and independence from all else, the thought of the possibility that this state might cease or that he may be distanced from Allah fleets across his mind, and he feels a pain in his heart. This feeling is known as fear. These states naturally follow yearning and intimacy. And if man is overcome by a feeling of intimacy and detaches himself from noticing all that he does not

yet fathom, and does not entertain the thought of it ever ending, his feeling of pleasure and blessing is enhanced even further. When someone predominantly feels intimacy with Allah, their sole desire is to be left alone in seclusion. And that is because intimacy with Allah necessitates a state of desertion away from everything else apart from Allah, and in fact, any obstacle to seclusion is very burdensome upon the heart.

It is narrated that Prophet Moses (A), when His Lord conversed with him, spent a long time unable to bear hearing anyone else speak without falling unconscious. This is because love necessarily engenders the sweetness of the speech of the Beloved and the sweetness of His remembrance. Hearing anything else causes that sweetness to leave the heart. So when a lover is among people, he is a loner within a group, but is as animated as a whole group when he is by himself; he is as a stranger in town, though when left alone, it is as if he is in his own hometown; when among them, it is as if he is absent, but when away from all, his presence is felt. He mingles among them physically but his heart is away from it all, preoccupied in the sweetness of remembrance.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) described such people,

The knowledge that they have acquired has made them see the reality of matters, and has instilled in them the spirit of conviction, such that they incline towards that which the opulent and affluent find unbearable. They feel content in the company of things that frighten the uneducated and ignorant ones. They live among people in this world with their physical bodies while their souls soar to the heights of Divine Eminence. These are the ambassadors of Allah on this earth and those that invite people towards His religion.¹⁹

هم قوم هجم بهم العلم على حقيقة الأمر، فباشروا روح اليقين واستلنا ما استوعره المترفون،

وأنسوا بما استوحش منه الجاهلون، صحبوا الدنيا بأبدانِ أرواحها معلقة بالخل الأعلى، أولئك خلفاء الله في أرضه والدعاة إلى دينه.

Informality when speaking with Allah

Know that when this intimacy continues, it becomes normal for a person. Neither the disquietude of yearning nor the fear of being distanced or veiled from Allah disturb it. Instead, it leads to a certain informality in speaking with and acts for Allah. This may come across negatively [to others] as something audacious, but nevertheless it is possible for someone who has attained this station of intimacy. Those who have not attained this station of intimacy but nonetheless feign this informality in their speech and acts are like those who have destroyed their own selves and border on infidelity.

An example of this is the conversation of Barkh:

There was a man at the time of Prophet Moses (A). Allah had commanded Moses (A) to pray for rain for the Israelites after they had suffered a drought for seven years. Moses (A) had gone outside with seventy thousand people to pray for rain, and then Allah, Mighty and Exalted, revealed to him saying, 'How can I answer their supplication when their sins cast such a shadow over them. Their insides are vile and they supplicate Me without any conviction, and believe themselves to be safe from My plot. Go instead to one of My servants known as Barkh, and ask him to come out and I will answer him'.

So Moses (A) asked about him but could not find him. One day as he was walking, he came across a black man with an earth-stained forehead from prolonged prostration. He was wearing a shawl around his neck. Moses (A) recognized him by Allah's divine light. He greeted him and asked, 'What is your name?'

He said, 'My name is Barkh.'

Moses said, 'You are the one we have been looking for. Please come out and pray for rain for us.'

So he came out and spoke to Allah: 'This is neither very effective of You nor is it a reflection of Your clemency. What does it seem to You? Are Your clouds disobeying You or are the winds rebelling against Your obedience? Or have Your stores depleted? Or has Your wrath over the sinners become so intense? Are you not supposed to be the All-Forgiving? You created Your Mercy before the creation of these erring people, and You are the One who has commanded kindness. Are you trying to prove to us that You can withhold, or do You fear that they will die before You've had a chance to chastise them?'

It was not long before Israelites were soaking with rain, and Allah, Mighty and Exalted, made the herbage grow tall within half a day. Barkh turned to leave, when Moses (A) approached him, asking, 'How could you challenge My Lord like that? How did you arrest Moses's understanding?'

So Allah, Mighty and Exalted, revealed to him, 'Indeed, Barkh makes Me laugh three times each day.'²⁰

أمر الله تعالى كلمه موسى (ع) أن يسأله ليستسقي لبي إسرائيل، بعد أن قحطوا سبع سنين وخرج موسى (ع) ليستسقي لهم في سبعين ألفاً، فأوحى الله عز وجل إليه: كيف أستجيبُ لهم، وقد أظلمت عليهم ذنوبهم، سرائرهم خبيثة، يدعونني على غير يقين، ويأمنون مكري. ارجع إلى عبد من عبادي يقال له برخ، فقل له يخرج حتى أستجيب له. فسأل عنه موسى (ع) فلم يعرف، فبينما موسى ذات يوم يمشي في طريق، إذا بعبد أسود قد استقبله بين عينيه تراب من أثر السجود، في شملة قد عقدها على عنقه، فعرفه موسى (ع) بنور الله عز وجل فسلم عليه....

Know that this indulgence and coquettishness may be allowed to certain servants and not to others. Because of his intimacy with Allah, Moses (A) was granted this indulgence in his manner with Allah when he said, 'It is only Your test by which You lead astray whomever You wish and guide whomever You wish' (7:155). Similarly, he was granted this indulgence when he presented his excuses not to go to Pharaoh to combat his rebellion,

My Lord! I fear they will impugn me, and I will become upset, and my tongue will fail me. So send [Your messenger] to Aaron. Also they have a charge against me, and I fear they will kill me. (26:12-14)

We are indeed afraid that he will forestall us or will overstep the bounds. (20:45)

If anyone other than Moses had said this, it would have been considered as a lapse in etiquette. However, one who has attained this station of intimacy with Allah can be a little indulgent and can speak like this. Jonah (A) was not allowed to address Allah in similar terms when he had attained a station of awe and sobriety, and he was imprisoned in the belly of the fish in three layers of darkness, and would have remained thus until the Day of Resurrection:

Had it not been for a blessing that came to his rescue from his Lord, he would surely have been cast on a bare shore while he were blameworthy. (68:49)

Our Prophet (S) was prohibited from following his example, and was told:

So submit patiently to the judgment of your Lord, and do not be like the Man of the Fish who called out as he choked with grief. (68:48)

These differences exist either because of the differences in their individual states and stations, or because of previously decreed distinctions and differences between them in their lot amongst the servants of Allah. Allah said:

Certainly We gave some prophets an advantage over others. (17:55)

These are the apostles – some of whom We gave an advantage over others: of them are those to whom Allah spoke, and some of them He raised in rank.... (2:253)

Jesus (A) was one of the ones who was distinguished,

and it is as a result of his indulgence in his relationship with Allah that he could invoke peace upon himself when he said, 'Peace be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I am raised alive' (19:33). This relaxedness results from Allah's grace that he has witnessed in a state of intimacy.

John the Baptist (A) was in a state of awe and modesty before Allah, as he did not speak until His Creator invoked peace on him: 'Peace be upon him, the day he was born, and the day he dies, and the day he is raised alive!' (19:15).

And look at the concessions that were made for Joseph (A)'s brothers when they wronged Joseph. Some scholars have said that starting from the beginning of their account in the Qur'an from the verse, 'When they said, "Surely Joseph and his brother are dearer to our father than [the rest of] us"' – continuing to the verse where he is sold [Qur'an, 12:8-20] – one can count forty-odd transgressions of theirs, some worse than others. A single word contains three or four such transgressions, and yet they were forgiven and pardoned.

Yet 'Uzayr was not allowed to ask a single question about decree and destiny. He was told that if he did such a thing again, his name would be removed from the record of prophethood.

These stories have been mentioned in the Qur'an in order that Allah's practice with regard to His servants who have passed before may be known. Every single thing that is mentioned in the Qur'an is a light, a source of guidance, and an instruction from Allah to His creatures.

Allah's love for his servant

Allah's love for His servant is expressed through removing the veil between Him and His creature such that the latter may see Him with his heart, and through enabling him to attain nearness to Him, and by willing that for Him and decreeing it as such. It is also expressed through the purification of His servant's heart from harbouring anything other than Him, and by vacating it of all impediments that might come between him and His Master, until the servant neither hears anything but the Truth, nor sees anything but the Truth through the Truth, nor utters anything but the Truth, as the *hadith qudsi* goes,

No sooner does a servant seek nearness to Me through the supererogatory prayers than I love him, and when I love him, I become the ears with which he hears, the eyes with which he sees and the tongue with which he speaks.²¹

ولا يزال العبد يتقرب إليّ بالنوافل حتى أحبه، فإذا أحببته كنت سمعه الذي يسمع به وبصره الذي يبصر به ولسانه الذي ينطق به.

The servant's attempt at attaining nearness through the supererogatory prayers becomes a means for his heart to be purified, for the veil between Allah and His creature to be lifted, for him to attain a level of nearness to his Lord – all this is as a result of Allah's grace and kindness towards him, as Allah says:

Allah will soon bring a people whom He loves and who love Him...that is Allah's grace which He grants to whomever He wishes. (5:54)

Allah loves those who fight in His way in ranks. (61:4)

Allah loves the penitent and He loves those who keep clean. (2:222)

The Prophet (S) said,

Allah gives the world to those whom He loves as well as to those whom He does not love.²²

إن الله يعطي الدنيا من يحب ومن لا يحب.



When Allah loves a servant, He tests him; and if he is patient, He selects him; and if he is satisfied [with His decree] then He chooses him.²³

إذا أحب الله عبداً ابتلاه، فإن صبر اجتياه، وإن رضي اصطفاه.



When Allah loves a servant, He makes the servant's heart warn him and his heart restrain him, and [He makes the heart] command [him to do] good and prevent [him from doing] evil.²⁴

إذا أحب الله عبداً جعل له واعظاً من نفسه وزاجراً من قلبه يأمره وينهاه.

The most distinct sign of Allah's love is the servant's love for Allah, Mighty and Exalted, for that in itself is an indicator of Allah's love for him. And the action which indicates that he is beloved to Allah is the fact that Allah takes charge of all his affairs, be they outward or inward, private or public. He is the one who guides him, who plans his affairs, who balances his character, who makes his limbs move, who remedies any shortcomings – inner or outer, who replaces all his worries with a single concern, who makes the world despicable to him in his heart, who makes him averse to all others, who affords him intimacy with Him by allowing him the pleasure of conversing with Him in seclusion, and who removes the veils between Himself and His servant.

**Allah – glory be to Him – is the most
obvious being**

Know that Allah is the most obvious and most manifest being. For He exists in His own right, while everything else exists only through Him.

Allah says,

Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. (24:35)

Light is manifest in its own right and makes all other things apparent. It is the source of all knowledge – of all that the knowers know. Actually, light is existence. Every time you see an object, you become aware of light – even if you do not realize it. The very fact that light is so obvious is because it is so self-evident.

It comes as no surprise that things can appear hidden as a result of their manifestation, for various things are highlighted only through their opposites; their very existence is unknown, and unless their opposites are brought forth, one is not aware of their existence. If things were to differ in their existence in that some of them lead us to the existence of Allah and not others, then the only thing we would have become aware of is the concept of variance between things, but the fact that they all point to His existence in the same manner is what makes it difficult to become aware of Him.

An example of this is the light of the sun that shines onto the earth. We know that it is an occurrence that happens on the earth and that vanishes when the sun sets, and if the sun were to shine constantly without ever setting, we would believe that objects have no dimension, only colour. Light is something that we cannot be aware of by itself; it is only when the sun disappears and

everything becomes dark that we understand the difference between the two states of light and darkness. We come to realize that objects were lit up with an external light that departed when the sun set. Hence, we come to realize the existence of the light through its absence, and we would not have been able to behold it knowingly were it not for its absence, nor would we have been able to witness the similarity and difference between objects in light and darkness.

This is true given the fact that light is the most manifest of tangible things, and by virtue of it, other tangible things are fathomed. But the One who is manifest in His own right, and makes others things manifest is more obvious than all others – but look how unintelligible He is found to be simply because of the fact that there is no opposite to Him.

The Truth, Himself is the most manifest of all beings. All other things are manifest only through Him, and if He ever stopped existing or became absent or changed, the heavens and the earth would self-destruct, the entire kingdom and cosmos would cease to exist, and the difference between the two states would be glaringly obvious. If, however, some things were extant through Him and others independently of Him, then we would only become aware of the difference between the two inasmuch as their variance. All things, however, indicate His existence in the same manner, and His existence is constant in all states whereby it is impossible to separate Him from the existence of other beings. No wonder, then, that the sheer intensity of His manifestation is the very thing that causes Him to be hidden. The verses of poetry express this as follows:

His extreme manifestation hides Him

Day-blind eyes cannot fathom Him

Even healthy eyes water from His intensely brilliant Face

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

Imaginations cannot contain Him. Rather He manifests Himself to the imaginations with His help, and yet refuses to be imagined by the imagination.²⁵

لم تحط به الأوهام بل تجلى لها بها وبها امتنع منها.



He is manifest in His discretion, and discreet in His manifestation. His concealment does not detract from His manifestness and His manifestness does not prevent Him from being hidden. He is near and at the same time distant. He is high and at the same time low. He is manifest and also concealed. He is concealed yet well-known. He lends but is not lent anything.²⁶

ظاهر في غيب وغايب في ظهور... لا تجنه البطون عن الظهور ولا يقطعه الظهور عن البطون،
قرب فنأى وعلا فدى، وظهر فبطن، وباطن فعلى، ودان ولم يدن. أي ظهر وغلب ولم يغلب.

He is manifest, and He encompasses everything but cannot be encompassed Himself. This is what is meant by the saying, 'I know Allah through the fact that opposites are united in Him.'

Notes

¹ Ibid., p. 271.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ al-Saduq, *al-Amali*, p. 438.

⁵ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 224.

⁶ *Ilal al-Shara'i*, vol. 1, p. 57.

⁷ In Du'a Kumayl.

⁸ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 19.

⁹ Excerpts from the whispered prayers of Imam 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin (A) reproduced with permission from Imam Zayn al-Abidin, *The Psalms of Islam (Al-Sahifah Al-Sajjadiyah Al-Kamilah)*, trans. W. Chittick (London: Muhammadi Trust, 2006).

¹⁰ Fayd Kashani says in a footnote that this was narrated to him, but he did not find a source for it in any of the Shi'a books.

¹¹ Lit. 'members of common species'

¹² *al-Iqbal*, p. 349.

¹³ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 98; *al-Tawhid*, p. 109.

¹⁴ *al-Iqbal*, p. 349.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

¹⁶ *al-Tawhid*, p. 117.

¹⁷ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 98.

¹⁸ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 196.

¹⁹ al-Radi, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, saying 146.

²⁰ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 312.

²¹ al-Barqi, *al-Mahasin*, p. 291.

²² al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 300.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ al-Radi, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon 185.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, sermon 195.

❖ Conviction & Reliance ❖

Introduction

With regards to conviction and reliance [on Allah], Allah says in the Qur'an:

And they have conviction in the Hereafter. (2:4)

The Prophet (S) said,

The least of that which you have been given is conviction and perseverance, and whoever has been given a share of these two should not worry about [supererogatory] fasts that they miss in the daytime or prayers that they miss in the night.¹

من أقل ما أوتيتم اليقين وعزيمة الصبر، ومن أوتي حظه منهما لم يبال ما فاتته من صيام النهار وقيام الليل.

He was once asked which was better – a man of conviction who committed many sins or a diligent worshipper with little conviction, so he replied,

There is no human who does not sin, but for one who has intellect as an inherent disposition, and conviction as a quality will not be harmed by his sins, because every time he sins, he will repent, seek forgiveness and feel remorse, so his sins will be expiated, and there will remain with him a virtue with which he can enter Paradise.²

ما آدمي إلا وله ذنوب، ولكن من كان غريزته العقل وسجيته اليقين لم تضره الذنوب، لأنه كلما أذنب ذنباً تاب واستغفر، وندم فتكفر ذنوبه ويبقى له فضل يدخل به الجنة.

He has also said, 'Conviction is all of faith.'³

اليقين، الإيمان كله.

In his advice to his son, Luqman said,

My son, no task can be attempted without conviction, and man can only act in proportion to his conviction. No sooner does he fall short in his work than it reduces his conviction.⁴

يا بني لا يستطيع العمل إلا باليقين، ولا يعمل المرء إلا بقدر يقينه، ولا يقصر عامل حتى ينقص يقينه.

It is narrated that Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

'Every single thing has a limit'.

He was asked, 'What is the limit of reliance?'

He replied, 'Conviction'.

He was asked again, 'And what is the limit of conviction?'

He replied, 'That one does not fear anyone besides Allah.'⁵

عن الصادق (ع) قال: ليس شيء إلا وله حد، قيل: فما حد التوكل؟ قال: اليقين، قيل: فما حد اليقين؟ قال أن لا يخاف مع الله شيئاً.

He also said,

A man can be said to have sound conviction when he does not please people through Allah's displeasure, nor does he blame them for what Allah has not given him, for sustenance is not driven by the greed of the covetous nor repelled by the abhorrence of the ill-wisher. Even if you were to run away from your own sustenance as you run from death, your sustenance would find you just as death finds you.

Allah, in His fairness and justice, has placed comfort and repose in conviction and contentment, and has placed worry and anxiety in doubt and discontentment.⁶

قال (ع): من صحة يقين المرء المسلم أن لا يرضي الناس بسخط الله، ولا يلومهم على ما لم يؤته الله، فإن الرزق لا يسوقه حرص حريص ولا يرده كراهية كاره، ولو أن أحدكم فر من رزقه كما

يفر من الموت، لأدركه رزقه كما يدركه الموت. ثم قال: إن الله بعدله وقسطه جعل الروح والراحة في اليقين والرضا، وجعل الهم والحزن في الشك والسخط.

By his statement 'nor does he blame them for what Allah has not given him', he means that he does not reproach them for not aiding him financially or otherwise, for someone endowed with conviction knows that this is how the matter is to be and does not blame anyone for it. He knows that this is what he needs in essence with regards to his own development, and that this is what Allah has willed for him in his ultimate wisdom.

He also said,

Continuous but small actions [performed] with conviction are better in the sight of Allah than abundant good deeds without conviction.⁷

إن العمل الدائم القليل على اليقين أفضل عند الله تعالى من العمل الكثير على غير يقين.

He also narrated that the Commander of the Faithful (A) used to say,

A servant [of Allah] will never savour the taste of faith until he knows that whaever afflicts him would never have missed him, and whatever has missed him would never have touched him; and that the only One to induce harm and benefit is Allah, the Exalted.⁸

لا يجد عبد طعم الايمان حتى يعلم أن ما اصابه لم يكن ليخطئه، وأن ما أخطاه لم يكن ليصيبه، وأن الضار النافع هو الله تعالى.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) also narrated,

The Commander of the Faithful (A) was sitting under a wall that was leaning forward, settling matters between people, when one of them said, 'Don't sit under this wall –it is dangerous.'

Imam Ali (A) replied, 'Are you trying to protect a man from his destined end?' As soon as he got up, the wall fell down.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) and others like him used to be like

this, and this is conviction.⁹

جلس إلى حائط مائل يقضي بين الناس، فقال بعضهم: لا تقعد تحت هذا الحائط فإنه معور، فقال أمير المؤمنين (ع): حرس أمراً أجله، فلما قام سقط الحائط، قال: وكان أمير المؤمنين (ع) مما يفعل هذا وأشباهه، وهذا اليقين.



Qanbar, the servant of Imam 'Ali (A) used to love 'Ali so intensely that whenever 'Ali used to go out, he would follow in his tracks with a sword.

One night he saw him and asked, 'What are you doing, Qanbar?'

He replied, 'I have come to walk behind you, O Commander of the Faithful.'

He exclaimed, 'Woe to you! Do you seek to protect me from the beings of the sky or from the people of the earth?'

He replied, 'The people of the earth, of course.'

He said, 'The people of the earth cannot do anything to me without the permission of Allah from the sky. Now go back.' So he went back.¹⁰

قال: كان قنبر غلام علي (ع) يحب علياً حباً شديداً، فاذا خرج علي (ع)، خرج على أثره بالسيف، فرآه ذات ليلة فقال: يا قنبر، مالك؟ قال: جئت لأمشي خلفك يا أمير المؤمنين، قال: ويحك أمن أهل السماء تحرسني أو من أهل الأرض؟ قال: لا بل من أهل الأرض، فقال: إن أهل الأرض لا يستطيعون لي شيئاً إلا بإذن الله من السماء: فارجع فرجع.

Once [when speaking about how sustenance is pre-ordained and apportioned], Imam al-Rida (A) was once asked,

'How can you say such a thing, when blood is shed for the sake of sustenance?'

He replied, 'Allah has a valley of gold which he protects with the weakest of his creatures – the ant, and even if the strongest of camels were to covet it, they would not be able to reach it.'¹¹

قيل للرضا (ع): إنك تتكلم بهذا الكلام والسيف يقطر دماً، فقال: إن الله تعالى وادياً من ذهب حماه بأضعف خلقه، النمل، فلو رامه البخاري لم تصل إليه.

He also said,

The treasure which Allah mentions in the verse 'and there was beneath it a treasure belonging to them' (18:82) was contained in [the words] 'In the Name of Allah, the all-Beneficent the all-Merciful'. I wonder how one who is convinced of death can be joyful. I wonder how one who is convinced of Divine Decree can be distressed. And I wonder at those who see the world and the way that it plays with the people on it – how can they rely on it?¹²

كان في الكنز الذي قال الله تعالى: ﴿وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا﴾ كان فيه: بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم، عجبت لمن أيقن بالموت كيف يفرح؟ وعجبت لمن أيقن بالقدر كيف يحزن؟ وعجبت لمن رأى الدنيا وتقلبها بأهلها كيف يركن إليها.

Levels of conviction

Conviction is to see all things as being from the Cause of all causes and to not turn to any means or mediums, but rather to see all means as being subject to His command, with no independent control of their own. Then it is to trust in Allah's guarantee of sustenance that whatever He has apportioned for him will definitely be driven towards him. Then it is for the heart to be certain in the knowledge that whoever does an atom's worth of good will see it and whoever does an atom's worth of evil shall see it. Then it is to know that Allah watches him in every state and witnesses the thoughts in his innermost conscience and the secrets of his musings. As a result, one becomes principled in all his states and dealings with Allah and his efforts are much more concentrated on developing, purifying and adorning his inner self for the

pleasure of Allah than for other people.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says,

Conviction takes the servant to every sublime state and wondrous station, and thus did the Messenger of Allah (S) inform us of the great status of conviction. When someone mentioned to him that Jesus son of Mary (A) used to walk on water, he replied, 'If his conviction were any greater he would have walked on air.'

By this, he meant that in spite of the majesty of the rank that the prophets have with Allah, they are also distinguished from each other according to their conviction, and nothing else. Conviction is something that is ever increasing, and remains so throughout eternity. The believers also vary in the strength and weakness of their conviction. A person whose conviction is strong may be recognised by the fact that he finds himself stripped of all ability and power other than what Allah has given him, and by his steadfastness upon Allah's command, and His worship, both outwardly and inwardly. To him, both the states of having and not having are equal, as are increase and decrease, praise and reproach, honour and abasement, because he sees them all in one light. However, a person whose conviction is weak attaches himself to external causes, and makes concessions for his lower self therein. He follows the customs and sayings of people without substantiating them, and strives to procure and hold on to the affairs of this world, all the while justifying it with his tongue, attesting that there is no withholder or giver save Allah and that the slave can only obtain that which has been provided and allotted to him, and that effort will not increase one's sustenance. His deeds and his heart, however, contradict his words.

Allah, the Exalted, says in the Qur'an, 'They say with their mouths what is not in their hearts; and Allah best knows what they conceal' (3:167). Allah has been compassionate to His servants in that He has given them permission to earn and toil for their provision, as long as they do not transgress His limits nor neglect their obligations to Him, nor the practice of His Prophet in any of their actions, nor abandon the spirit of trust in Him, nor fall into the trap of greed. When they forget this, however, and attach themselves to the opposite of what has been delineated for them, they are counted among the destroyed people, who have achieved nothing in the end apart from their false claims.

Not everyone who earns is necessarily reliant on Allah, and from his earnings he ends up bringing for himself only that which is forbidden and dubious. The one who is truly reliant can be recognized by the fact that he sacrifices what he earns, goes hungry and spends for the sake of religion, and he does not withhold from giving. He who is given permission to earn is one who earns for himself while his heart relies solely on Allah. If he has a lot of wealth, he stands above it like a trustee, knowing that having it and not having it are the same. When he withholds it, he withholds for Allah, and when he spends it, he does so in the way that Allah, Mighty and Exalted, has commanded. Both his giving and withholding are for the sake of Allah.¹³

اليقين يوصل العبد إلى كل حال سني ومقام عجيب. وكذلك أخبر رسول الله (ص) عن عظم شأن اليقين، حين ذكر عنده عن عيسى بن مريم (ع) كان يمشي على الماء، قال لو زاد يقينه لمشي في الهواء...
في الهواء...

Reliance on Allah is the door to sustenance and mercy

Reliance occupies one of the most elevated positions in religion, and is one of the stations of those who have conviction. In fact, it is one of the highest levels of those brought near to Allah. In essence, it is an intellectual quandary, and arduous when put into practice. The reason why it is intellectually difficult to grasp is because on the one hand noticing and depending on external causes is polytheism by implication, and on the other hand, distancing oneself completely from intermediary causes contests the prophetic practice and discredits the divine law, while depending on them is tantamount to diving into a chasm of ignorance.

Allah says,

Put your trust in Allah, should you be faithful. (5:23)

CONVICTION & RELIANCE

And in Allah let all the trusting put their trust. (14:12)

And whoever relies on Allah, He will suffice him. (65:3)

Indeed Allah loves those who trust in Him. (5:159)

He has esteemed the one who puts his trust in Him with the lofty station of His love, and the guarantee of the cloak of His sufficiency, for indeed the one who is beloved to Him is neither chastised, nor distanced, nor veiled.

He also says,

Does not Allah suffice His servant? (39:36)

So the one who seeks others to suffice him abandons reliance on Allah, and rejects this verse.

The Prophet (S) said,

If you relied solely on Allah the way He deserves to be relied upon, you would be given your sustenance the way birds are sustained, waking hungry and returning sated.¹⁴

لو أنكم تتوكلون على الله حق توكله، لرزقكم كما يرزق الطير، تغدو خماصاً وتروح بطاناً.



Whenever someone trusts exclusively in Allah, Allah gives him sufficient provision and sustains him from whence he would never imagine. And whenever someone places his trust in this world, Allah entrusts him to it.¹⁵

من انقطع إلى الله كفاه الله كل مؤنة ورزقه من حيث لا يحتسب، ومن انقطع إلى الدنيا وكفه الله إليها.



Whoever wants to be the richest of people should trust in what is with Allah more than he trusts in what is in his own hand.¹⁶

من سرّه أن يكون أغنى الناس فليكن بما عند الله أوثق منه لما في يده.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Allah revealed to David (A): 'No sooner does one of My servants

resort to Me over any of My creatures, than I know this from his intention. The heavens and the earth and all who dwell therein can entrap him, but I will make an exit for him from beneath them. And no sooner does one of My servants resort to any of My creatures than I know that from his intention, and I cut off from him the means of sustenance from the heavens and move the earth from beneath him, not caring which valley he perishes in.¹⁷

أوحى الله تعالى إلى داود (ع) ما اعتصم بي عبد من عبادي دون أحد من خلقي، عرفت ذلك من نيته، ثم تكيده السماوات والأرض و من فيهن إلا جعلت له المخرج من بينهن، وما اعتصم عبد من عبادي بأحد من خلقي، عرفت ذلك من نيته، إلا قطعت أسباب السماوات وأسخت الأرض من تحته ولم ابال بأي واد هلك.



Wealth and honour wander around, and when they reach a place where there is trust in Allah, they settle there.¹⁸

إن الغنى والعز يجولان، فإذا ظفرا بموضع التوكل أوطنا.

He said that he read in one of the scriptures,

Allah, the Exalted, says: 'By My Honour and Sublimity, and by My Glory and Elevation upon My Throne, I cut off the hopes of anyone who hopes from anyone other than Me, with despair; and I clothe him with the garb of disgrace among people, and remove him from My nearness, and distance him from My Grace. How can he place his hope in someone else during hardships when those very hardships are in My Grasp? And how does he dare to entertain expectations of someone else, knocking at someone else's door with his whims while the very keys to these locked doors are in My Hand, and while My door is open to anyone who calls Me?

Is there anybody whom I have ever disappointed, when, in a calamity, he has placed his hope in Me? And is there anybody whose expectations I have cut off when he has expected something from Me? I guard the hopes of my servants, but they are not satisfied with My Guardianship. I have filled the skies with beings that do not tire of glorifying Me, and have commanded them not to shut the doors of communication between Me and My servants, but they (the servants)

do not have trust in My Word.

Does the one afflicted with one of My tribulations not know that no one can remove it without My permission, apart from Me? So why is it that I see him oblivious of Me, when I have given him of My Generosity that which he has not even asked Me? And I have removed from him that which he has not even thought to ask Me to repel from him, asking others instead. Have you not seen how I am the One to give first before I have even been asked. Then I am asked last of all, so I do not reply. Am I then the One who withholds, that My servant dares to regard Me as such? Am I not the One who possesses generosity and kindness? Are pardon and mercy not in My grasp? Am I not the destination of all hope, for who is there who can cut them save I? Do the expectant ones not fear lest they place their hope in other than Me?

If all the inhabitants of the skies and the earth were to entertain high hopes, and I fulfilled all their hopes, there would not be an atom's weight of decrease in My kingdom, for how can such a kingdom diminish when I uphold it? How wretched are those who despair of My mercy, and how wretched those who disobey Me and do not fear Me.¹⁹

و عنه (ع) انه قرأ في بعض الكتب أن الله تعالى يقول: وعزتي وجلالي ومجدي وارتفاعي على عرشي لأقطعن أمل كل مؤمل غيري باليأس، ولأكسونه ثوب المذلة عند الناس، ولأنحينه من قربي، ولأبعدنه من وصلي، أيؤمل غيري في الشدائد والشدائد بيدي؟ ويرجو غيري، ويقرع بالفكر باب غيري؛ وييدي مفاتيح الأبواب، وهي مغلقة وبابي مفتوح لمن دعاني؟...

Strength of the heart and conviction

Know that when someone truly and sincerely believes that there is no actor but Allah – that there is no power or might but Allah's – that He has the full knowledge and power to suffice His servants –that He has absolute kindness, care, and compassion towards His servants, one and all – and that there is no power above His ultimate power, no knowledge above His perfect knowledge, and

no care above His complete care – then that person's heart will unequivocally rely upon Allah alone; he will not turn his face to anyone else, not even to his own self.

When a person does not find this state present in himself, the cause goes back to one of two things – either a weakness in his conviction, or a weakness and sickness in his heart, where cowardice has overtaken it, and it is agitated because of the misconceptions that preside therein. The heart can become agitated by entertaining a particular notion that does not affect his conviction in any way, such as its disconcertedness at the thought of spending the night with a corpse, in a grave or in a bed, for example, even though he has no aversion to other inanimate objects.

So reliance on Allah cannot be complete without both the strength of the heart as well as strong conviction, as the tranquillity and contentment of the heart is only achieved through them both. Know that tranquillity of the heart and conviction are two different things, and many a conviction is not accompanied by tranquillity in the heart, as Allah says in the Qur'an to His Friend [Abraham (A)]:

He said, 'Do you not believe?' He said, 'Yes indeed, but in order that my heart may be at rest' (2:260).

And many a person can rest assured in his heart and yet have no conviction, such as the people of various sects and religions. The Jew is content of his Judaism in his heart as is the Christian, but it could not be said that they have certainty because they are following something which is not certain. The guidance has come to them from their Lord, which would bring them that conviction, but they have turned away from it.

Imam al-Kazim (A) said, with regard to Allah's verse in

the Qur'an, 'And whoever relies on Allah, He will suffice him' (65:3),

There are various levels to reliance on Allah, one of which is to rely on him in every single matter so that you are content with everything that happens to you, knowing that He will only ever do what is good and favourable for you, and knowing that He has wisdom in that. So rely on Allah by handing everything over to him completely, and trust Him with respect to them.²⁰

التوكل على الله درجات، منها أن تتوكل على الله في أمورك كلها، فما فعل بك كنت عنه راضيا تعلم أنه لا يالك خيرا وفضلا، وتعلم أن الحكم في ذلك له، فتوكل على الله بتفويض ذلك عليه وثق به فيها وفي غيرها.

The other levels of reliance probably entail relying on Allah in some matters over others, and the reason that they have been distinguished as different levels is because of the variety and complexity of issues, though the quality of reliance is one and the same.

Earning a livelihood

There are people who assume that the meaning of reliance on Allah is to abandon the physical quest for one's earnings, to relinquish future planning with one's heart, and to slump on the ground like a pile of rags or a lump of meat on a butcher's block. This is the thinking of ignorant people and is actually prohibited in Islam, for man has been tasked with seeking out his provision through the means that Allah guides him to, such as agriculture, trading, manufacture, and other professions that Allah has permitted.

Just as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage are acts of worship that Allah has made incumbent upon His servants, through which they attain nearness to Him, so is the quest for one's lawful provision an act of worship that

Allah has made incumbent upon them through which they attain nearness to Him. In actual fact, it is the best act of worship, as we elaborated in second treatise. At the same time, however, He expects of them to place their trust in none but Him, Mighty and Exalted, and to not rely on the intermediary means, just as He expects of them to not rely on their good deeds to attain salvation, but rather on the Grace of Allah, the Exalted.

So the meaning of the reliance that we have been commanded to have through divine instruction is the heart's dependence on Allah in all matters, to the exclusion of all others. Procuring one's means does not contradict this if one does not depend on them, but rather depends on Allah always aware of the fact that Allah can provide him with his requirements from whence he cannot imagine, aside from these particular means that he has procured, and aware also that Allah may cut off these means from their causes, be they for the sake of generating an expected profit, or to avert an impending danger, or to remove a foreseen calamity. It is to rely on Him in all things – be they immediate, such as lifting food to the mouth with the hand – or projected, such as carrying a load on a journey, gathering arms to fight the enemy, acquiring goods to trade, saving up to insure against future hardship, finding a cure for an illness, keeping away while standing watch against predators or living in an area which might flood or which is under a leaning wall, locking the door, or tying one's camels.

As for means of conjecture such as drawing lots, fortune-telling, omen-reading, and delving pedantically into minute details in planning, these all thwart reliance on Allah, since these kind of things are not considered to

be real means by sensible and reasonable people. They are not included among the things that Allah has commanded us to resort to, and have in fact been prohibited. The basic thing that we have been commanded to do as regards planning is to plan on a general scale, neither pedantically relying on minute details, nor failing to plan by procrastinating.

The Prophet (S) said,

The Faithful Spirit [the Angel Gabriel] revealed to me that not a soul shall pass away before its sustenance in this world runs out, so be wary of your duty to Allah and seek your livelihood through decent means.²¹

ألا إن الروح الأمين نفث في روعي أنه لا تموت نفس حتى تستكمل لذتها، فاتقوا الله عز وجل وأكملوا في الطلب.



Taking off on the sea is not the best way of earning one's livelihood.²²

ما أجهل في الطلب من ركب البحر.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Your quest to secure your means of subsistence should be more than the one who does nothing to earn, and less than the greedy man who depends on and is satisfied with this world. You must place yourself in the position of a fair and modest person by raising yourself from the level of weakness and incapacity, and bringing yourself down [from the level of greed], and seeking what you need of your livelihood. Those who have been given wealth and are not grateful for it have no wealth.²³

ليكن طلبك المعيشة فوق كسب المضيع ودون طلب الحريص الراضي بدينه المظمن إليها، ولكن أنزل نفسك من ذلك بمنزلة المنصف المتعفف ترفع نفسك عن منزلة الواهن الضعيف، وتكتسب ما لا يد منه، إن الذين اعطوا المال ثم لم يشكروا لا مال لهم.



When you have opened the door [to your shop] and have set out your wares, then you have fulfilled what is incumbent upon you.²⁴

إذا فتحت بابك وبسطت بساطك فقد قضيت ما عليك.

Reliance upon Allah is not thwarted whether one seeks his livelihood through decisive means or through risky means, since Allah has the power to give us our requirements without those means, but 'Allah, glory be to Him, has decreed for all things to run their course according to their means.'²⁵ As Imam al-Sadiq (A) has said:

Allah loves for His servants to seek their subsistence from Him through means that He has placed at their disposal for that purpose, and which He has commanded them to utilise. Allah, the Exalted, says, 'But take your precautions' (4:102). When describing how to perform the prayer in fear, He says: 'taking their precautions and their weapons' (4:102) and 'Prepare against them whatever you can of might and war-horses' (8:60). He said to Moses: 'Set out with My servants by night' (44:23). The security of the night was sought so they would be hidden from the sight of the enemies to avert danger from them.²⁶

وأحب الله لعباده أن يطلبوا منه مقاصدهم بالأسباب التي سببها لذلك وأمرهم بذلك قال الله تعالى: ﴿وَاخْذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ﴾ وقال في كيفية صلاة الخوف: ﴿وَلْيَأْخُذُوا حِذْرَهُمْ وَأَسْلِحَتَهُمْ﴾ وقال: ﴿وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ﴾ وقال موسى: ﴿فَأَسْرِ بِعِيَادِي لَيْلًا﴾ والتحصن بالليل اختفاء عن أعين الأعداء دفعا للضرر.

When a Bedouin left his camel untied and said, 'I rely only on Allah,' the Prophet (S) told him,

First tie it, then rely.²⁷ إغفلها وتوكل.

It is said that there was once an ascetic who abandoned living in the city and went to sit atop a mountain. He swore he would not ask anyone for anything until his

Lord sustained Him. He remained there for seven days. He was on the verge of death, and no sustenance came to him. He implored, 'My Lord, if you want to keep me alive, then give me my sustenance You have apportioned for me. Otherwise, take me up to Yourself.'

So Allah revealed to him: 'By My Honour and Might, I will not give you your sustenance until you go back to the city and sit among the people'

And so he went back to the city and sat. One person brought him food, and another brought him drink. He ate and drank but felt very apprehensive in his heart. So Allah revealed to him: 'You wanted to do away with My wisdom through abstaining from this world, but know that when I give My sustenance to My servant, I prefer to do it through the hands of My other servants, rather than through the hand of My own power.'

A narration – which is considered to be spurious and of Judaic [rather than Islamic] origin – says,

Moses (A) was once afflicted with an ailment. The Israelites recognized his symptoms and advised him to take a certain medicine in order to be relieved of it.

He replied, 'I will not take medicine so that Allah cures me Himself without the need for medicine.'

His ailment continued and worsened, and Allah revealed to him: 'By My Honour and Might, I did not cure you so that you would remedy yourself with what they advised you.'

Then he turned to them: 'Give me the remedy that you had mentioned', so they gave it to him, and he was cured. He felt apprehensive about this in his heart, so Allah revealed to him: 'By relying on Me in this manner, you thwarted My Wisdom. Who is it who placed the benefits in these medicaments apart from Me?'²⁸

في الإسرائيليات أن موسى عليه السلام اعتل بعلّة فدخل عليه بنو إسرائيل فعرفوا علته فقالوا له:

لو تداويت بكذا لبرئت فقال: لا أتداوى حتى يعافيني هو من غير دواء، فطالت علته فأوحى الله إليه: وعزني وجلالي لا أبرأتك حتى تتداوي...

There are people who assume that true reliance on Allah is to suffice oneself with unseen means rather than the obvious means at one's disposal. So such a person might travel, for example, across a valley, little used by people, without provision after having trained himself to go hungry and the like. There is no reason for him to impose this on himself – no constraint in his heart that compels him to do so, nor a plagued conscience, nor even the excuse of Allah's remembrance. He refrains from subsisting off wild herbs and the like, and consoles himself with the mistaken notion that if he dies hungry, it will be a boon for him in the Hereafter. Or such a person sits in his house or in the mosque, excusing himself from earning a living in order to sit in reflection or remembrance and to spend all his time immersed in worship, whereby he does not even bother to look up to see who enters and who he can be of service to. He is resolved in his heart to persevere in relying on Allah for his subsistence.

This is wrong because someone who imposes such a hunger strike on himself when he is able to subsist on herbs and the like, and there are obvious means at his disposal, is not really needy. On top of that, he is in actual fact relying on his own capacity and ability to withstand hunger and resist eating wild herbs – so where is the reliance on Allah then? If he really trusted Allah alone, then he should have stayed in his town using the means at his disposal, but relying on Allah and not those means, as Allah commanded the ascetic to do in the aforementioned account. As for mentally preparing himself to die hungry

by choice, that is forbidden in Islam, as Allah, Mighty and Exalted, says:

And do not cast yourselves with your own hands into destruction. (2:195)

As for the person who sits in his house, worshipping his Lord instead of earning a living, he too has abandoned action in accordance with Allah's command to go out and earn. Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

The one who supports him financially is a better worshipper than him.²⁹

إِنْ مِنْ يَقُوَّتُهُ أَشَدَّ عِبَادَةً مِنْهُ.

Such a person may even be a burden on other people. If he is interrupted, he will moan and complain, and attack people's innermost intentions. By doing this, he only exposes himself to disgrace unless he goes out amongst people, but then he goes back to a prior state of self-conceit and exposes himself to destruction.

When it comes to reliance on Allah, the key to approaching any means, be they hidden or obvious, is to accept that the meaning of reliance is to trust in Allah alone, not the intermediary means, whether they exist or not, and whether they are at one's disposal or hidden.

Of course, the degrees of reliance that people have differ according to the variety of their individual levels in the strength or weakness of their conviction, in their high hopes or low expectations, in the extent or lack of their involvement in their planning, and in their social circumstances as to whether they have dependents or not. There are some who are in the class of those brought near to Allah, and some who are people of the right hand, and others who have no reliance whatsoever. All this is proportionate to the level of one's dependence on

intermediary means, for some, not at all, for others a lot or a little. One whose faith is strong does not depend entirely on external means, and so Allah provides him from whence he may not expect, whether he went out to earn it or not. He is not out to run after his provision, only to obey Allah's command to earn, and his dependence is on none but Allah alone, and not on his earnings.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Allah has declined to place the believers' livelihoods anywhere except where they do not expect it.³⁰

أبى الله أن يجعل أرزاق المؤمنين إلا من حيث لا يحتسبون.

In the above narration, he has specifically said 'believers' because it is a prerequisite of true faith that one does not place one's trust in the means, but rather on Allah alone, Mighty and Exalted. True faith belongs to those who have true knowledge from among the prophets and saints, and this is Allah's Grace that He grants to whomever He wishes.

Imam al-Sajjad (A) said,

I found all of goodness in cutting off hopes from obtaining what other people's hands possess.³¹

رأيت الخير كله في قطع الطمع عما في أيدي الناس.

He who does not place his hopes in people for a single thing, Allah takes charge of his affairs in every little thing, and Allah answers his every need.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Wretched is the servant who serves his greed, and wretched is the servant who serves his desires which disgrace him.³²

بنس العبد عبد له طمع يقوده، وبنس العبد عبد له رغبة تذله.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

The believer's nobility lies in standing in prayer at night, and his honour lies in being independent of other people.³³

شرف المؤمن قيام الليل، وعزّه استغناؤه عن الناس.

Notes

- ¹ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 1, p. 68.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 57.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 58.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 59.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 59.
- ¹³ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 177.
- ¹⁴ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 222; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 226.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ A similar narration is mentioned in al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 68, p. 138.
- ¹⁷ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 63.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p. 65.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p. 66.
- ²⁰ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 65.
- ²¹ Ibn Abi Furas, *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, vol. 1, p. 163; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3, p. 224.
- ²² al-Saduq, *Man La Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, vol. 1, p. 293.
- ²³ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 100, p. 36.
- ²⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 183.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 257.
- ²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, pp. 262-263.

²⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi* vol. 5, p. 78.

³⁰ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 100, p. 35; *Makarim al-Akhlaq*, p. 270.

³¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 320.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., p. 488.

❖ Honesty & Trustworthiness ❖

Introduction

The lowest level of honesty (*sidq*) is truthfulness in one's speech in all situations, and the highest level is to refrain even from unnecessary ambiguities that may be misconstrued or misunderstood as meaning the opposite, and to refrain from adopting a dishonest stance with Allah even in one's heart, so that when one says, 'I turn my face to Allah alone' or 'You alone do we worship', he really does that.

Then his intention should be exclusively for Allah, whereby he is devoid of all ambiguity, and said to be completely and genuinely honest. One who is honest in his intention is undoubtedly sincere.

Then comes his determination, which is a firm resolution to do good, where a person is determined to act and says to himself, for example, 'Whatever Allah brings my way, even if it be inconceivable, when I meet the enemy, I will fight him in the way of Allah, and I will not care even if I am killed in the process.' Or there may be a languor in his determination, or hesitation or a weakness that counters the truth of one's resolve.

This is followed by steadfastness upon one's resolve, for the soul may start off full of determination when there are no obstacles in its way, but when reality hits, his self-

control wanes, his desires start to surface and his resolve is disturbed; then that counters the honesty in it. This is why Allah says:

Among the faithful are men who fulfil what they have pledged to Allah. (33:23)

Then in his actions, he works hard to the extent that his outward actions do not contradict what is really in his heart. If something untoward may come to his heart, he does not stop working, but pushes his inner self to match what he portrays outwardly.

Note that this is not showing off or dissimulation, because the one who shows off gives an impression of piety for the sake of other people. Similarly, many a person who stands in prayer, in a state of humbleness, does not necessarily do so to impress other people, but his heart is so inattentive in his prayer that one who sees him assumes him to be standing in front of Allah, Mighty and Exalted, while inside he is actually standing in the marketplace in front of his desires. Similarly he may walk with an air of sobriety and humbleness, whereas inside he is not actually like that. This is dishonesty in one's actions, even if one does not seek to impress others by them or show off to them. There is no salvation from this except by bringing both inward and outward states into harmony with each other, where his inner becomes like his outer, or even better than it.

This is in accordance with Imam 'Ali's saying,

I would never urge you to perform a good deed without first performing it myself, nor would I prohibit you from a misdeed without first refraining from it myself.¹

إني والله ما أحثكم على طاعة إلا وأسبقكم إليها، ولا أناكم من معصية إلا وأتأني قبلكم عنها.

Then come the various spiritual stations or virtues, which occupy the highest and most honourable levels, such as honesty, fear, hope, respect, asceticism, love, reliance, and all other such virtues. All these matters have principles, objectives, and realities, which when actualized, make one deserving of the name of that attribute. The honest person is the one who actualizes these within himself.

Allah says:

The faithful are only those who have attained faith in Allah and His Prophet and then have never doubted. (49:15)

Piety is not to turn your faces to the east or the west; rather, piety is [personified by] those who have faith in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets, and who give their wealth, for the love of Him, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveller and the beggar, and for [the freeing of] the slaves, and maintain the prayer and give the *zakat*, and those who fulfil their covenants, when they pledge themselves, and those who are patient in stress and distress, and in the heat of battle. They are the ones who are true [to their covenant], and it is they who are the God-fearing. (2:177)

Abu Dharr was once asked about faith, so he recited the above verse in reply.

They objected, 'We asked you about faith.'

He replied, 'I asked the Messenger of Allah (S) about faith, and he recited this verse.'²

سُئِلَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ الْإِيمَانِ، فَقَرَأَ هَذِهِ الْآيَةَ فَقِيلَ لَهُ سَأَلْنَاكَ عَنِ الْإِيمَانِ فَقَالَ: سَأَلْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ص) عَنِ الْإِيمَانِ فَقَرَأَ هَذِهِ الْآيَةَ.

To give an example of fear as a virtue, every single believer should fear only Allah, in the true sense of the word. However, it may turn out to be a dishonest fear that has not really been actualized. Do you not see how he

fears a ruler or a robber on his travels? How his face pales, his sides tremble, he loses his appetite, his food loses its flavour, and he loses sleep over it. His thoughts are preoccupied with it to the extent that he is of no use to his family or children, and he may even move away from his own hometown. His tranquillity has now turned to terror, his comfort to hardship in anticipation of impending danger – all that because of the fear of something that might happen. The same person, however, does not fear the Fire, nor does he display any of these symptoms when he is committing a sin.

This is why the Prophet (S) said,

I have not seen anything as terrifying as the Fire, yet the one who seeks to escape from it sleeps; and I have not seen anything like Paradise, yet the one who seeks it sleeps.³

لم أر مثل النار نام هاربها ولم أر مثل الجنة نام طالبها.

To be able to actualize these virtues is very, very rare indeed, but everyone has some degree of these virtues present in them – depending on their condition, either weak or strong.

The levels of honesty are endless, and a person may be honest in some things and not others. One who is honest in all situations and circumstances is truly veracious (*siddiq*).

Truthfulness of the heart and tongue

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says,

If you want to know whether you are honest or dishonest, then look at the intention in your heart and the depth of your outward claim, and measure it according to Allah's Balance, as if you stand before Him, Mighty and Exalted, on the Day of Judgment. He says, "The

weighing [of deeds] on that Day is a truth' (7:8). If your inner self is in harmony with your outer claim, then you are honest. The lowest level of honesty is that the tongue should not contradict the heart, and vice versa. The truthful person with this description is like the angel who draws out his soul; if he does not draw it out, then there is nothing else for him to do.⁴

فإذا أردت أن تعلم أصادق أنت أم كاذب؟ فانظر في قصد معنك، وغور دعواك وعبرها بقسطاس من الله عز وجل كأنك في القيامة قال الله عز وجل: ﴿وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ﴾، فإذا اعتدل معنك بدعواك، ثبت لك الصدق، وأدنى حد الصدق أن لا يخالف اللسان القلب، ولا القلب اللسان. ومثل الصادق الموصوف بما ذكرنا كمثال النازع روحه إن لم ينزع فماذا يصنع.

He also said,

The first thing that Allah confirms in an honest person is his honesty. He [Allah] knows that he [this person] is honest, so he [this person] himself confirms his own honesty and knows that his soul is honest.⁵

إن الصادق أول من يصدقه الله تعالى، يعلم أنه صادق فيصدقه نفسه تعلم إنه صادق.



A servant tells the truth to such an extent that he is recorded with Allah as honest, and he may lie to such an extent that he is recorded with Allah as a liar. So [on the Day of Judgment] if he tells the truth, Allah, the Exalted, will say, 'He tells the truth and is good'; and if he lies, Allah, the Exalted, will say, 'He lies and is corrupt.'⁶

إن العبد ليصدق حتى يكتب عند الله من الصادقين، ويكذب حتى يكتب عند الله من الكاذبين، فإذا صدق قال الله تعالى صدق وبر، وإذا كذب قال الله تعالى كذب وفجر.



Call people towards goodness through means other than your tongues, so they see hard work, honesty, and piety in you.⁷

كونوا دعاة الناس بالخير بغير ألسنتكم، ليروا منكم الاجتهاد والصدق والورع.

He told one of his companions,

Look at what [position] 'Ali (A) attained [in the eyes of] the Prophet (S) and hold to it, for 'Ali (A) attained what he did from the Prophet (S) as a result of his truthful speech and his returning what was entrusted to him.⁸

انظر ما بلغ علي (ع) عند رسول الله (ص) فالزمه، فان علياً بلغ ذلك عند رسول الله (ص) بصدق الحديث وأداء الأمانة.

He also said,

Do not look how long someone bows or prostrates, for those are things that he has perfected by habit, and abandoning them would distress him. Rather, look at the truthfulness of his speech and at how reliable he is returning what is entrusted to him.⁹

لا تنظروا الى طول ركوع الرجل وسجوده فإن ذلك شيء اعتاده ولو تركه لاستوحش لذلك، ولكن انظروا إلى صدق حديثه وأداء أمانته.



Every prophet that Allah, the Exalted, sent was honest and returned what was entrusted to him – both to good and bad people.¹⁰

إن الله تعالى لم يبعث نبياً إلا بصدق الحديث وأداء الأمانة إلى البر والفاجر.



Returning trusts attracts sustenance whereas treachery attracts poverty.¹¹

أداء الأمانة يجلب الرزق والخيانة تجلب الفقر.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

Return the trusts that have been placed in your care, even to the murderer of a prophet's son.¹²

أدوا الأمانات ولو إلى قاتل ولد الأنبياء.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

When someone entrusts something in your care, return it back to

him. Even if he betrays your trust, do not betray his.¹³

من ائتمنتك بأمانة فأدها إليه، ومن خانك فلا تخنه.

Notes

- ¹ al-Amidi, *Ghurar al-Hikam*, vol. 1, p. 258.
- ² al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4, p. 358.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 35.
- ⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 104.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 105.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 104.
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 105.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 104.
- ¹¹ Himyari, *Qurb al-Isnad* (n.l.: n.d.), p. 55.
- ¹² al-Harrani, *Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, p. 155.
- ¹³ al-Saduq, *Man La Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, vol. 3, p. 114.

FIFTH TREATISE

**Acts of Worship and their
Inner Mysteries**

In it are seven books...

❖ Intention & Sincerity ❖

Introduction

The Prophet (S) said,

Actions are in accordance with intentions. Everyone shall have what they aim for. So whoever migrated for Allah and His Messenger has migrated to Allah and His messenger. Similarly, whoever migrated for the world shall acquire it; or [whoever migrated] for a woman shall wed her. Their migration is for whatever they migrated towards.¹

إنما الأعمال بالنيات وإنما لكل امرء ما نوى، فمن كانت هجرته إلى الله ورسوله فهجرته إلى الله ورسوله، ومن كانت هجرته إلى دنيا يصيبها أو امرأة يتزوجها فهجرته إلى ما هاجر إليه.

He said this because some of his Companions told him that several of those who had travelled for jihad had no intention in journeying except to receive the spoils of war, wealth, or captives; or to gain high standing consequent to the triumph. Thus he clarified that each one will receive what he ought to for his actions; and he will reach whatever he intends – be it worldly or spiritual.

Scholars of *hadith* consider this as one of the frequently narrated *hadith*; and it is the very first thing that they teach their children, saying: ‘This is half of knowledge.’

Know that something cannot be considered worship, nor counted as an act of obedience to Allah – for which

one would be rewarded in the Hereafter – unless what is desired from the act is nearness to Allah and the abode of the Hereafter, by which I mean for the sake of Allah for attaining His reward or salvation from His chastisement. In summary, it is submission to the commands of Allah whereby His slaves comply with His words, the Sublime and Glorious, when He says:

And call unto Him in fear and hope...and they call unto Us aspiring as well as fearing. (7:56; 21:90)

In countless verses, with promises of Paradise and threats of the Hellfire, Allah urges and dissuades, promises and threatens. He shall reward them according to their capabilities, spiritual levels, and intentions. Whoever recognises Allah through His beauty and glory and subtlety of action; whoever loves Him and yearns for Him and worships Him sincerely – solely because He is worthy of worship and out of love for Him – Allah will love that person, purify him, draw him near, and approach him with a spiritual and mystical nearness. As He says about those who have such characteristics:

Indeed for him is nearness to Us and a beautiful recourse. (38:25)

The Commander of the Faithful, the Master of the Monotheists [‘Ali ibn Abi Talib] said,

My Lord, I have not worshiped You out of fear of Your Hellfire, nor desire for Your Paradise. Rather I found You worthy of worship, and so I worshiped You.²

إلهي ما عبدتك خوفاً من نارك ولا طمعاً في جنتك، لكن وجدتك أهلاً للعبادة فعبدتك.

So whoever recognises Allah alone through Himself as the Divine, the Creator of the cosmos, Almighty, Powerful, Omnipotent and Omniscient; and that He has a

Heaven, which He bestows to the obedient; and a Hellfire by which He punishes the rebellious, then he would worship in order to gain Heaven or for salvation from the Hellfire. Consequently, Allah would allow him to enter Paradise due to his worship and obedience and certainly rescue him from the Hellfire, just as He had informed him on more than one occasion in His book. Certainly, everyone shall have what they intended.

Do not incline towards the one who claims that acts of worship are rendered void if they are performed to attain reward or salvation from the Hellfire. This person alleges that such an intention contradicts true sincerity— that is, acting solely for the sake of Allah — when the act is performed for one's own benefit or in order to repel harm, and not for the sake of Allah.

These are certainly the utterances of one who has no cognizance of the realities of the obligatory duties and people's ranks within them. In fact, he has no idea about the meaning of 'intention' and its reality, which is the awakening of the soul, its inclination and attention towards its goal and pursuit, be it immediate or deferred. The intention is not simply the utterance of the one who is offering an intention when he performs an act of worship, as he says: 'I am doing this in order to gain nearness to Allah.' The intention is the conceptualisation of the significance of these words and its realisation in his heart, even if his soul is not brought nearer (to Allah).

Such words are merely the movement of the tongue and talking to oneself, like none other than a satiated person saying, 'I desire this food with the intention of attaining a craving for it.' Already satiated, he cannot attain his goal through words and imagination alone.

Most people cannot worship solely seeking the pleasure of Allah and nearness to Him because they only know Allah, the glorified, through hope or fear. They aim to remind themselves of the Hellfire and guard themselves from it, or else to remind themselves of Paradise and whet their appetites for its rewards. This is especially true for those who are inclined towards this world, who are seldom impelled to perform good deeds for the sake of the rewards of the Hereafter – let alone to worship to glorify Allah, the Glorified and Sublime, simply because He deserves to be worshipped and obeyed. Few understand this, and even fewer practice it. Were they required to do this, they would be required to bear an unbearable burden.

‘Sincerity in worship’ only means that the intention should not be sullied with a worldly taint or immediate worldly benefits, like praise or freeing a slave to avoid paying his upkeep (as shall be clarified). Obviously, this is not in conflict with seeking Paradise or salvation from the Fire, although this thinking is common. If this type of intention did corrupt acts of worship, then arousing hope and terror, or promising and threatening, would all have been futile and would in fact have harmed the main goal (of purifying the intention).

Would that I knew how the weak, lowly, humble slave with no control over his benefit, harm, death, life, or resurrection could be needless of acquiring benefit from the divine Master or repelling harm from himself. Most people would never say that worship is invalidated when it is done out of hope or fear. Otherwise, their ‘rightful’ intentions in worship would often return to one of those two intentions without them realising it.

It is related from Imam al-Sadiq (A):

The slaves [of Allah] fall into three groups. One worships Allah, the Glorious and Sublime, out of fear; this is the worship of slaves. Another worships Allah, the Glorious and Sublime, seeking reward; this is the worship of hirelings. And one worships Allah, the Glorious and Sublime, out of love for Him – and this is the best worship.³

العباد ثلاثة: قوم عبدوا الله عز وجل خوفاً، فتلك عبادة العبيد، وقوم عبدوا الله عز وجل طلب الثواب فتلك عبادة الاجراء، وقوم عبدوا الله عز وجل حباً له فتلك عبادة الأحرار، وهي أفضل العبادة.

The believer's intention

It is narrated in a famous (*mashhur*)⁴ narration from the Prophet (S):

A believer's intention is better than his action, and a disbeliever's intention is worse than his action. Everyone acts according to his intention.⁵

نية المؤمن خير من عمله ونية الكافر شرّ من عمله، وكل عامل يعمل على نيته.

Jurists differ about what this narration means.

It is clear to me that this is because believers intend many good deeds but cannot carry them out due to time, and so the rewards for their intentions outnumber the rewards for their deeds.

Additionally, believers intend to worship in the best manner because their faith requires this. Then, when they busy themselves with that, they find it difficult and do not worship as they would have liked or would have intended. And so, for all acts of worship, what they intend is better than what they do.

Imam al-Baqir (A) used to allude to this when he would say,

A believer's intention is better than his action, for he intends good

that he does not achieve. The disbeliever's intention is worse than his action, because he intends and hopes for evil that he does not achieve.⁶

نية المؤمن خير من عمله، وذلك لأنه ينوي من الخير ما لا يدركه، ونية الكافر شر من عمله، وذلك لأن الكافر ينوي الشر ويأمل من الشر ما لا يدركه.

It is narrated that someone said to Imam al-Sadiq (A):

'I have heard you say that the believer's intention is better than his action. So how can intention be better than action?'

He replied, 'Because deeds can be performed to show off for the Creation, while intention is exclusively for the Lord of the Worlds. Thus, Allah, the Sublime and Glorious, grants for the intention what is not granted for the deed.'

Then he said, 'During the day, a servant may intend to pray at night, only for his eyes to be overcome with sleep. Hence, Allah establishes his prayer for him and records his breath as glorification and makes his sleep charity.'⁷

وعن الصادق (ع) انه قيل له: سمعتك تقول: نية المؤمن خير من عمله، فكيف تكون النية خيراً من العمل؟ قال (ع): لأن العمل إنما كان رياء للمخلوقين، والنية خالصة لرب العالمين، فيعطي عز وجل على النية ما لا يعطي على العمل. ثم قال: إن العبد لينوي من غماره أن يصلي بالليل فتغلبه عينه فينام، فيثبت الله له صلاته ويكتب نفسه تسبيحاً ويجعل نومه صدقة.

It is also narrated that he said,

The believing, poor servant may say, 'O Lord! Grant me your sustenance so that I could perform this or that good deed.' If Allah, the Sublime and Glorious, knows that his intention is pure, He writes for him the reward of what that deed would have been. Truly, Allah is all-embracing and generous.⁸

إن العبد المؤمن الفقير ليقول: يارب ارزقني حتى أفعل كذا وكذا من البر ووجوه الخير، فإذا علم الله عز وجل ذلك منه بصدق نيته كتب الله له من الأجر مثل ما يكتب له لو عمله، إن الله واسع كريم.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) was asked how to define which

worship could actually be considered to have fulfilled the obligation to worship. He replied,

A good intention in obeying Allah.⁹ حسن النية بالطاعة.

This means that he should have a good intention when obeying Allah. If he can, he should perform his worship in a way which agrees with his intention. Otherwise, he should fulfil his religious duties with a good intention.

He also said,

People are sent to the Fire eternally because, had they lived forever, they would have intended to disobey Allah forever. People are sent to Paradise eternally because, had they lived on, they would have intended to worship Allah forever. The eternity of either is due to their intentions.

Then he recited the Word of Allah: 'Say: Everyone acts according to his form' (17:84), explaining it as, 'According to his intention.'¹⁰

إنما خلد أهل النار في النار، لأن نياهم كانت في الدنيا أن لو خلدوا فيها أن يعصوا الله فيها أبداً، وإنما خلد أهل الجنة في الجنة لأن نياهم كانت في الدنيا أن لو بقوا فيها أن يطيعوا الله أبداً، فبالنيات خلد هؤلاء وهؤلاء، ثم تلا قوله تعالى: قل ﴿كُلُّ يَغْمَلُ عَلَىٰ شَاكِلَتِهِ﴾ قال: على نيته.



Whoever hears of a reward for a deed and, hence, does it will receive its reward – even if it was not as he heard [through authentic narrations].¹¹

من سمع شيئاً من الثواب على شيء فصنعه، كان له أجره وإن لم يكن على ما بلغه.

It has been mentioned¹² that the meaning of the famous narration that a good intention is better than a good deed is that if an intention is better than a deed, the benefit of the deed rests upon the intention – but not vice-versa – and because the primary purpose of the deed is to affect the heart and incline it towards Allah the Exalted and

away from others, as Allah the Sublime and Glorious said: 'Neither its flesh, nor its blood reaches Allah. Rather the God-consciousness from you reaches Him' (22:37). Do you not see the difference in sin between someone who copulates with his wife wishing she was someone else, versus someone who copulates with a different lady thinking she is his wife? It is a characteristic of the heart that it is [spiritually] affected.

Thus the meaning of this narration from Imam al-Sadiq (A) is understood:

A good deed is recorded for whoever plans to do a good deed but does not carry it out.¹³

من هم بحسنة ولم يعملها كتبت له حسنة.

This is because the heart is inclining towards good and turning away from whims and love of this world. This is the ultimate goal of doing good deeds; actually carrying out the deed increases its impact. Hence the purpose behind shedding the blood of the sacrifice [during the hajj] is neither the blood nor the flesh. Rather, it is to separate the heart from the love of this world and offer this sacrifice for the sake of Allah. This originates from a steadfast resolution and intent. If some impediment then thwarts the deed, then 'neither its flesh, nor its blood, reaches Allah. Rather the God-consciousness from you reaches Him' (22:37), and the God-consciousness is in the heart.

It is for this reason that, upon his departure for the expedition of Tabuk,

The Prophet (S) said, 'Some people in Medina crossed the valleys with us and gained a foothold against the disbelievers with us and incurred expenses with us and were overcome with hunger with us – even though they remained in Medina.'

He was asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, how was that possible when they were not with us?'

He replied, 'Their circumstances excused them, but they accompanied us with their good intentions.'¹⁴

قال النبي (ص) لما خرج في غزوة تبوك: إِنَّ بالمدينة قومًا ما قطعنا واديًا ولا وطننا موطنًا يغيظ الكفار، ولا أنفقنا نفقة ولا أصابتنا محمصة، إلا شاركونا في ذلك وهم في المدينة، قالوا: وكيف ذلك يا رسول الله وليسوا معنا؟ قال: حبسهم العذر فشاركونا بحسن النية.

Singular and compound intentions

Intention can be either singular – such as standing out of respect – or compound, such as giving charity to a poor relative (which includes not only charity but strengthening bonds of kinship). Sometimes, no part of the compound intention is independent; for instance, this would be known if the charity were withheld if one of the conditions were not met. Other times, the intentions can be mutually independent – of equal weight or varying – in which case, the reward would be intensified according to its different facets – whether the deed is good or evil.

For instance, a person could enter the mosque to visit Allah, as the Prophetic narration states,

Whoever enters the mosque has visited Allah, the Glorious and Sublime; and kindness towards the visitor is an obligation on the host.¹⁵

من دخل المسجد فقد زار الله عز وجل وحق على المزار إكرام زائره.

Or, the person could enter the mosque to wait for prayer, for *i'tikaf*, for spiritual seclusion, for remembrance of Allah, and to abandon sins. However, the same person could also sit in the mosque to chatter about useless things, to look at women, and to debate and wrangle in

order to show off.

The best compound intentions transform ordinary things into acts of worship, such as using perfume on Fridays to establish the Sunnah, out of respect for the mosque and the holy day, to remove offensive odours, to please others with the scent, and to close the door to backbiting [by not giving others the reason to gossip about a bad smell].

Intention may make some actions meritorious – for instance, taking a short nap or engaging in some permissible entertainment in order to feel refreshed for prayer; this is better than getting bored during prayer. The worst compound intention is the one which turns a permissible deed into a sin, such as applying perfume to proudly show off wealth, or beautifying the self for the sake of committing adultery.

However, forbidden things do not become permissible just because of good intentions. So, for example, drinking alcohol does not become permissible even if done for the sake of harmony with one's peers.

Developing a sincere intent

Intention is beyond one's control. You know this because it is an impulse from the self which turns it to what it perceives as beneficial for itself, either immediately or eventually. As long as people do not believe that arriving at a specific objective requires a certain action, they will pay no attention to that action. This is not something which can be thought about every moment. But when people do believe that something needs to be done, the heart – if empty and not occupied by another preoccupation or a stronger interest – will turn its

attention to that action. But that is not always possible.

Motivations and actions have various causes. They may have the same or different causes, depending on people, circumstances, and the actions. If, for example, someone wants to get married because he is overcome with physical desire, but he does not have faith in the sound objective to beget a child, he cannot say that he is getting married with the intent to procreate. His intention cannot be anything higher than the fulfilment of his desires. Since his intention is the response to his impulse, and his impulse is only his desire, how could he have the intention of a child?

The best way to acquire this intention, for example, is first to strengthen his faith in the shariah and in the great reward in trying to increase the *ummah* of Muhammad (S). He should also rid himself of whatever concerns make him averse to having a child, such as the heavy financial burden, or physical exhaustion. If he does this, then perhaps the desire to have a child for the sake of divine reward will arise in his heart. This wish will then permeate his limbs and impel him to get up and finalize the marriage contract. As soon as this force reaches his tongue, and he accepts the marriage contract in response to the impulse that has overtaken his heart, he is actually making an intention. Until then, he cannot be considered to be doing so; if, in his heart, he is only mulling over the idea of having a child, he is merely musing, nothing else.

This is why some people used to refuse to perform certain acts of worship before the intention came to them. They would say, 'The intention has not come to me yet.' This is because they knew that the intention is the very spirit of the actions, and that action without intent is only

showing off, and that showing off results in Allah's hatred, not nearness to Him.

It is narrated that one of the protégés of Imam al-Sadiq (A) came to him, greeted him, and sat down. When the Imam (A) left, the man left with him. When he reached the door of his house, he entered and left the man outside. So his son Isma'il asked him,

'O father, didn't you at least invite him in?'

The Imam said, 'It was not appropriate for me to invite him in. He would not have come in. I would not want Allah to record me as a posturer.'¹⁶

عن الصادق (ع) أنه أتاه مولى له فسلم عليه وجلس، فلما انصرف (ع) انصرف معه الرجل، فلما انتهى إلى باب داره دخل وترك الرجل، فقال له ابنه اسماعيل: يا أبة ألا كنت عرضت عليه الدخول؟ فقال: لم يكن من شأني إدخاله قال: فهو لم يكن يدخل؟ قال: يا بني إني أكره أن يكتبني الله عراضاً.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

A sincere intention results in a tranquil heart, because the heart is saved from dangers and misfortunes through the purification of the intention solely for Allah, in every matter. Allah says: 'The day that neither wealth nor children shall be of any avail, except for the one who presents to Allah, a tranquil heart' (26:88-89).¹⁷

صاحب النية الصادقة صاحب القلب السليم، لأن سلامة القلب من هواجس الخدورات، تخلص النية لله في الأمور كلها، قال الله تعالى: ﴿يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ * إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ﴾.

And the Holy Prophet (S) said,

The believer's intention is superior to his action.¹⁸

نية المؤمن خير من عمله.



INTENTION & SINCERITY

Deeds are based upon their intentions; all people will have whatever they intend.¹⁹

وقال: إنما الاعمال بالنيات وإنما لكل امرء ما نوى.

The slave [of Allah] must purify the intention for every move. Otherwise, he will be negligent, and Allah has described the negligent:

They are like nothing but cattle; rather they are even more astray. (25:44)

They are the negligent ones. (7:179)

The intention emerges from the heart and is in proportion to the purity of one's understanding. It varies with time and according to one's strength and weakness. The souls and desires of people with sincere intents have been subjugated under the power and majesty of Allah and shyness from Him. Since their base natures, desires, whims, and lower souls have become exhausted, other people are at ease with them.

Sincerity

Sincerity is emptying the intention of any adulteration. The loftiest desire is the pleasure of Allah. This is understood by pondering His attributes and actions, and communing with Him. Next, the desire for a good Hereafter also benefits the soul. It has been said [by Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali]: 'You should say, "my Lord is Allah," and then be upright in what you have been commanded. Work for Allah without liking to be praised for it.'

Allah said:

And they have not been commanded except to worship Allah in sincere devotion. (98:5)

Is it not to Allah that sincere devotion is due? (39:3)

Except those who repent, reform, take refuge in Allah and devote themselves to Allah sincerely. (4:146)

It is narrated that the Commander of the Faithful said,

Glad tidings be to the one who sincerely dedicates his worship and supplication to Allah – the one who does not busy his heart with what his eyes see, does not forget the remembrance of Allah because of what his ears hear, and does not become sad because of what others have been granted.²⁰

طوبى لمن أخلص لله العبادة والدعاء ولم يشغل قلبه بما ترى عيناه، ولم ينس ذكر الله بما تسمع
إذناه، ولم يحزن صدره بما أُعطي غيره.

It is narrated that Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

When a servant dedicates his faith exclusively to Allah [alternate narration: remembers Allah exclusively] for forty days, Allah ends his desire for this world, shows him its harm and its remedy, and makes his tongue speak with wisdom which He establishes in his heart.²¹

ما أخلص عبد الإيمان بالله أربعين يوماً، أو قال ما أجمل عبد ذكر الله أربعين يوماً، إلا زهده الله في
الدنيا وبصره داعها ودواءها وأثبت الحكمة في قلبه، وأنطق بها لسانه.

It is narrated that, regarding the Qur'anic verse 'So that He may try which of you is best in deed' (67:2), Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

'It does not mean the one of you that does the most deeds. Rather, it means "the most accurate in deeds", and this comes from awe of Allah and sincere intention.'

Then he said, 'Persisting upon the deed until it is sincere is more difficult than the deed itself. The sincere deed is one which you do not wish anyone to praise you for except Allah, the Glorious and Sublime. The intention is superior to the deed. Truly, the intention is the deed.'

Then he recited the Word of Allah: 'Say: Everyone acts in accordance with his own disposition' (17:84) – meaning, his intention.²²

وعن الصادق (ع) في قول الله تعالى: ﴿لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا﴾ قال: ليس يعني أكثركم عملاً، ولكن أصوبكم عملاً، وإنما الإصابة خشية الله والنية الصادقة. ثم قال: الإبقاء على العمل حتى يخلص أشد من العمل، والعمل الخالص الذي لا تريد أن يحمذك عليه أحد إلا الله عز وجل، والنية أفضل من العمل، ألا وإن النية هي العمل. ثم تلا قوله تعالى: ﴿كُلُّ يَفْعَلُ عَلَىٰ شَاكِلِيهِ﴾ يعني على نيته.

The route to sincerity is breaking the carnal pleasures of the soul, severing one's covetousness for the world and dedicating one's self towards the Hereafter so that this disposition prevails over the heart. How many deeds do people tire themselves with, supposing they are acting sincerely for the sake of Allah? People are deceived, for they do not know the great danger of this.²³

A story has been told about one of these people, who said,

For thirty years, I prayed congregational prayers at the mosque in the first line. One day, I was late – for a good reason – and so I prayed in the second line. I was embarrassed when people saw me in the second line, and so I realized that being seen in the first line used to gladden me, and this had comforted my heart without me even realising it.

This is a fine line; deeds are seldom safe from this, and those who are cautious about this are few. Those who are oblivious of this will see all their 'good deeds' as sins in the Hereafter. What they did not expect will emerge before them from Allah: 'Then shall appear before them, the evil of what they used to do' (45:33), while they reckon that they have done well. This has been alluded to above in the chapter on self-delusion.

A merchant on hajj

Know that the *ummah* has a consensus that if someone

departs for hajj and also intends to trade, his hajj is intact and he will be rewarded for it – even though his journey was not exclusively for the hajj. Since trade yields sustenance, this is also a form of worship as has been mentioned.

It has been established that multiple good intentions lead to a doubling of the divine reward. Some people think that a merchant who goes on hajj will only be rewarded for performing the rites of hajj until his hajj ends in Mecca, even though he continues to do business. As long as he is sincere, the reward will be combined throughout his journey. He will have no divine reward if his intent is only to trade. However, if his main intention is to perform the hajj, and his secondary intention is to trade, then his journey will not be divided up with regards to the divine reward.

The lowest level of sincerity

In *Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

Sincerity is in all excellent actions. Its key is acceptance, and its end is Allah's pleasure. A sincere person is the one whose actions Allah accepts, and the one with whom He is pleased, even if that person's actions be few. If Allah does not accept someone's actions, then that person is not sincere, even though his actions be many – consider Adam and Iblis.

The sign of acceptance is when a person scrutinizes every action (or lack of action) when faced with anything desirable. The sincere person's soul is consumed with upholding what he knows. He spends his life unifying knowledge and action, the doer and the deed. If he achieves this, he has achieved everything. If this escapes him, then everything has eluded him. This is the explanation of the meaning of 'disassociation in the oneness of Allah'. As the first Imam (A) said, 'All who perform deeds perish – except the worshippers. The

worshippers perish – except the knowledgeable. The knowledgeable perish – except the truthful. The truthful perish – except the sincere. The sincere perish – except the God-fearing. The God-fearing perish – except the certain. Indeed, the certain are in grave danger.²⁴

Allah said to His Prophet: ‘And worship your Lord until you attain certainty.’

The lowest level of sincerity is the bondsman’s utmost exertion of effort. Thereafter, he does not think his deeds have any worth before Allah, nor does he presume that his Lord would be obliged to repay him for them, for he knows that – had he been charged with true servitude – he would have been incapable of fulfilling that duty. Therefore, the lowest level of sincerity leads to safety from all wrongdoing in this world, salvation from the Fire in the Hereafter, and success in Paradise.²⁵

الخلاص يجمع فواضل الأعمال، وهو معنى مفتاحه القبول، وتوقيعه الرضا، فمن تقبل الله منه ورضى عنه فهو المخلص وإن قل عمله، ومن لا يتقبل الله منه فليس بمخلص وإن كثر عمله... هلك العاملون إلا العابدون، وهلك العابدون إلا العاملون، وهلك المصدقون إلا المخلصون، وهلك المخلصون إلا المتقون، وهلك المتقون إلا الموقنون، وإن الموقنين لعلی خطر عظیم....

Notes

¹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 67, p. 212.

² al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 69, p. 278.

³ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 84.

⁴ *Mashhur* (‘famous’) is a technical term for a narration which is related by multiple narrators at certain stages in its transmission.

⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 85.

⁶ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 67, p. 190.

⁷ A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary texts of *hadith*. However, the narration has also been mentioned by al-Naraqi in *Jami‘ al-Sa‘adat*.

⁸ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 67, p. 200.

⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 83.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 85.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 88.

¹² Mentioned by Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*. Fayd Kashani also mentioned it in detail in *Mahajjat al-Bayda'*.

¹³ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 68, p. 252.

¹⁴ A similar narration is related in al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 21, p. 238.

¹⁵ A similar narration is mentioned by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi in *Tafsir al-Razi*, vol. 4, p. 6.

¹⁶ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 72, p. 458.

¹⁷ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 53.

¹⁸ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 7, p. 322.

¹⁹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 64, p. 111.

²⁰ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 67, p. 230.

²¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 16.

²² Ibid.

²³ It is narrated in *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Mu'assasat Al al-Bayt, 1993), vol. 1, p. 72, in the chapter on asceticism that Abu Basir related: 'I heard Aba 'Abd Allah (al-Sadiq) say: "The slave [of Allah] who had prayed (in the world) will be brought forth on the Day of Resurrection. He will say: 'O my Lord, I prayed for your sake'. It will thus be said to him: 'Rather, you prayed so that it would be said, "How good the prayer of so-and-so is!" Take him to the Hellfire.' " He then mentioned the same thing with regards to fighting, reciting the Qur'an, and giving charity.'

²⁴ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 67, p. 245.

²⁵ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 20.

❖ Purity & Cleanliness ❖

Introduction

On the subject of purity and cleanliness, Allah, the Glorified, says:

In it are men who love to purify themselves. And Allah loves those who purify themselves. (9:108)

Allah does not wish to place any difficulty upon you; rather, He wishes to purify you. (5:6)

The Prophet (S) said,

الطهور نصف الإيمان.¹ Purity is half of faith.



الطهور مفتاح الصلاة.² Purity is the key to the prayer.



بني الدين على النظافة.³ The religion has been founded upon cleanliness.



بئس العبد القاذورة.⁴ What a bad servant [of Allah] the filthy one is!



من اتخذ ثوباً فلينظفه.⁵ Whoever wears a garment should clean it first.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

Clean garments remove worry and grief, and are pure for prayer.⁶

النظيف من الثياب يذهب الهم والحزن، وهو طهور للصلاة.

From this, the discerning person should realise that faith is only complete when it renews the heart and the inner intentions. The intention behind the saying 'purity is half of faith' is that external cleanliness, by means of purification and cleansing with water, is merely half of the faith; the other half is inner cleanliness through righteous deeds and praiseworthy etiquette.

Purity, therefore, has four levels. The first is outer purity from things which require ritual cleansing or break the ritual ablution. The second is purification of the limbs from sins, crimes, and their consequences. The third is purification of the heart from evil traits and character vices. The fourth is the purification of the innermost self from anything other than Allah, the Sublime and Lofty. This is the purity of the prophets and the truthful ones; and purity at each level is half of the deed done at it.

These are the levels of faith; each level has stages, and a servant shall not reach a higher stage before passing the lower stage. He will not arrive at the innermost purification from all but Allah or reap the benefits – recognition of Allah, unveiling His majesty and greatness, may He be exalted – if he has not purified his heart from blameworthy traits and instilled it with praiseworthy ones and, as a result, made it obedient. Similarly, someone who has not purified his limbs from illicit deeds and, hence, made them pious through acts of obedience shall also not reach the aforementioned. The dearer the objective, the harder its quest; the longer its path; and the greater its impediments.

Do not suppose that this can be reached through simply wanting it, or that it is easy to reach. If someone's inner eye is blind to the disparity between these ranks, he will not understand any of the levels of the purity except the first, which is like the outermost shell of the desired core. He may begin to exert utmost efforts in scrutinising his outside (actions) while his inside is sullied with the impurities of arrogance, self-conceit, ignorance, showing-off, and hypocrisy.

The washroom

When a thinking person answers the call of nature, he should call to mind his own deficiencies and the filthiness he is comprised of – his comfort as they leave his body; the tranquillity of his heart after the impurities leave him; his consequent suitability to stand on the prayer-mat and invoke Allah; and the baseness of this world and the ultimate cessation of its desires, pleasures, and comforts.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says,

The washroom has been called *mustarah* [lit. 'place where rest is sought'] because the souls find relief from the burdens of impurities and are emptied of the glutinousness and filth from within them.⁷

سمي المستراح مستراحاً لاستراحة النفوس من أثقال النجاسات، واستفراغ الكثافات والقدر فيها.

At that time, the believer considers one who is free from the vanities of this world. Consequently, he becomes relaxed by refraining from and abandoning them. He empties his heart and soul from being preoccupied with them and abstains from accumulating them just as he would refrain from impurities, excrement, and filth. Consequently, he reflects upon his venerable soul and considers how lowly it would have been in its previous

state.⁴ As a result, he recognises that adherence to contentment and God-consciousness will result in comfort in both abodes (in this world and in the Hereafter). For comfort lies in belittling the world, staying aloof from seeking its pleasures, and eliminating the impurities of the forbidden and dubious things.

After recognising this, he shuts the gate of arrogance upon his soul and flees from committing sins; he opens the gate of humility, regret and modesty; he strives in carrying out His commands and refraining from His prohibitions, all this in the pursuit of a goodly eventual abode and pleasantness of the soul. And he confines his soul in the prison of (godly) fear, forbearance, and abstinence from the carnal desires, until he becomes connected to the security of Allah and the abode of peace and tastes His pleasure. This is what should be relied upon – besides this, there is nothing.

Brushing the teeth

It is narrated that the Prophet (S) said,

Your mouths are channels for the Qur'an, so fragrance them with the tooth-cleanser.⁸

إن أفواهكم طرق القرآن فطيبوها بالسواك.

✽

A prayer after brushing the teeth is superior to seventy-five prayers performed without brushing the teeth.⁹

صلاة على أثر السواك أفضل من خمس وسبعين صلاة بغير سواك.

And in *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

The Prophet (S) said, 'Brushing the teeth purifies the mouth and pleases the Lord.' He made it part of his Sunnah. It has innumerable

exoteric as well as inner benefits for one who understands. Just as you remove dirt – remnants from your food and what you consume –from your teeth by brushing them, similarly you should eliminate the impurity of your sins by supplication, humility, the night-prayer and begging forgiveness at the time of dawn. The purity of your inner and outer selves lies in cleansing the blemishes of violation (of Allah's laws) and the pursuit of the prohibited things, all sincerely for the sake of Allah.

The Prophet wanted to use brushing the teeth as an illustrative parable for the people of vigilance.¹⁰

قال النبي (ص): السواك مطهرة للفم مرضاة للرب وجعلها من السنن المؤكدة وفيها منافع للظاهر والباطن ما لا يحصى لمن عقل. وكما تزيل ما تلوث من أسنانك، من مطعمك بالسواك، كذلك فأزل نجاسة ذنوبك بالتضرع والخشوع والتهجد والاستغفار بالأسحار، وطهر باطنك وظاهره من كدورات المخالفة وركوب المناهي كلها خالصاً لله، فإن النبي (ص) أراد باستعماله مثلاً لأهل اليقظة .

This parable is that the *siwak*¹¹ is from a clean, tender plant and the branch of a pleasant, blessed tree; and the teeth are a creation fashioned by Allah as an instrument and tool for chewing, a means by which to satiate the craving of food and for the betterment of the stomach. They are pure gems that are sullied by constantly chewing food, thereby altering the smell of the mouth and causing the brain to degenerate. If the believer then brushes his teeth with this tender plant and polishes these pure gems with it, he removes the putridity and change (in smell), and they return to their original state.

Similarly Allah has created the heart pure and clear; and made remembrance of Allah, pondering, divine veneration, and glorification as its nourishment. If the pure heart is then mixed and tarnished by negligence and vexation, it should be polished with the varnish of repentance and cleansed with the water of penitence so

that it returns to its original state and its primordial gemlike purity. Allah says:

Allah loves those who repent and He loves those who purify themselves. (2:222)

The Prophet (S) outwardly commanded us to clean the teeth, while he desired to draw attention to the inward significance of this parable. When someone contemplates at the door of lessons, deducing the lessons from such parables, Allah opens the doors of abundant inner wisdom to him by His grace, and:

Allah does not forfeit the reward of the good doers. (9:120)

Ablution

The Prophet (S) said,

Whosoever performs the ritual ablution while remembering the name of Allah purifies his entire body. One ablution after another would act as a penance for whatever sins may have been committed between the two. And whoever does not pronounce the name of Allah does not purify any part of his body except what the water touches.¹²

من توضأ فذكر اسم الله، طهر جميع جسده، وكان الوضوء الى الوضوء كفارة لما بينهما من الذنوب، ومن لم يسم لم يظهر من جسده إلا ما أصابه الماء.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

When someone mentions the name of Allah while performing the ritual ablution, it is as if he has performed the full ritual bathing.¹³

من ذكر اسم الله على وضوئه فكأنما اغتسل.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

Whenever you desire purity and intend to perform the ablution, proceed towards water as you would proceed towards the mercy of Allah. For Allah has made water a key to His nearness and His

intimate discourse, a symbol towards the tapestry of His servitude. Just as His mercy purifies the sins of the slaves, the outward impurities are purified by water and nothing else.

Allah, the Exalted, said, 'It is He who sent the winds as glad tidings preceding His mercy and We have sent down, from the sky, immaculately pure water' (25:48). And He, the Sublime and Glorious, said, 'And We have made, from water, every living thing (21:30).'

Just as He brings life to the blessings of this world through water, thus, through His grace and mercy, the hearts come to life through obedience and pondering on the immaculacy of water – its fineness, purity, blessing, and subtlety of its intermingling with everything and in everything. He uses it to cleanse his limbs, whose purification Allah has commanded. Follow the etiquette of ablution – both the required and recommended aspects – for beneath these teachings lie numerous benefits, such that if someone performs these acts with the required sanctity, the springs of its benefits would gush forth immediately.

Thereafter, mix with the creation of Allah, just water blends with things, behaving with everything in its appropriate fashion, but itself unchanging. Heed the words of the Messenger of Allah: 'The likeness of the sincere believer is water.' Let your purity with Allah, the Exalted, in all your acts of obedience be like that of water, as He has sent it from the sky and called it 'pure'. Purify your heart with God-consciousness and certainty while you purify your limbs with water.¹⁴

إذا أردت الطهارة والوضوء، فتقدم إلى الماء تقدمك إلى رحمة الله، فإن الله تعالى قد جعل الماء مفتاح قربه ومناجاته، ودليلاً إلى بساط خدمته، وكما أن رحمته تطهر ذنوب العباد، كذلك النجاسات الظاهرة يطهرها الماء لا غيره، قال الله تعالى: ﴿وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُورًا﴾. وقال عز وجل: ﴿وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيًّا﴾، فكما أحى به كل شيء من نعيم الدنيا، كذلك برحمته وفضله جعل حياة القلوب بالطاعات. وتفكر في صفاء الماء ورقته، وطهوره وبركته، ولطيف امتزاجه بكل شيء وفي كل شيء. واستعمله في تطهير الأعضاء التي أمر الله بتطهيرها، وأت بأدائها فوائده وسننه، فإن تحت كل واحد منها فوائد كثيرة، فإذا استعملتها بالحرمة انفجرت لك عين فوائد عن قريب. ثم عاشر خلق الله تعالى كامتزاج الماء بالاشياء، تؤدي كل شيء حقه، ولا يتغير عن معناه، معتبراً لقول الرسول

Janabah is present under every single hair.¹⁸

تحت كل شعرة جنابة.

Since every part of the body is distanced from the elevated echelon and immersed into the lowly pleasures, it must be cleansed – and this is one of the foremost matters of ritual law – to be qualified for the noble encounter and to enter the lofty realm of worship.

In ritual purification using dust (*tayammum*), the limbs must be wiped with earth when they cannot be washed with water in order to humble them through contact with the remnants of the lowly earth.

A judicious and intelligent person will say that since the heart is worthier of purification, attentiveness to purifying it from the vices and hindrances that prevent a person from attaining virtue is worthier than purifying the outer limbs. Those who cannot purify their hearts from despicable mannerisms, nor empty their hearts to allow beautiful characteristics to take root, will stand humiliated as calamity befalls them and they taste the lashes of humiliation and heedlessness.

Perhaps, while they are broken and humble, their Merciful Master and Generous Lord will grant them a whiff of the fragrances of His shining light – for, according to narrations, this only occurs when the heart is broken. They might therefore progress by heeding these inclinations, until they acquire an attitude which would allow their deeds to be accepted – unlike their past deeds which were performed in negligence.

The public bath

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

What an excellent place the public bath is! The Hellfire is remembered in it while it also removes filth.¹⁹

نعم البيت الحمام، يذكر فيه النار ويذهب بالدرن.

From this, a discerning person should be reminded not to neglect the Hereafter at any moment, for it is his destiny and final abode. In everything he sees – water, fire, or anything else – he should find a lesson and warning. Whenever he sees darkness, he should remember the gloominess of the grave. Whenever he sees a snake, he should remember the serpents of the Hellfire. Whenever he hears a terrifying sound, he should think of the blowing of the trumpet. If he sees something pleasant, he should remember the bliss of Paradise. Whenever he hears of rejection or acceptance, he should remember that everything will be disclosed after the reckoning, during which deeds will be accepted and rejected. And so on, and so forth.

The public bath distinctly resembles the Hellfire: fire burns underneath it, and gloominess hangs overhead. Its heat should remind someone of the heat of the Hellfire. When someone is in the public bath, he should imagine himself imprisoned in a hot place for an hour, comparing it to the Hellfire and seeking refuge in Allah from it.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

When you enter the third chamber of the bath,²⁰ say: 'We seek refuge in Allah from the Hellfire and plead with Him for Paradise.' Repeat this until you exit the hot chamber.²¹

فإذا دخلت البيت الثالث فقل نعوذ بالله من النار ونسأله الجنة، ترددها إلى وقت خروجك من البيت الحار.

Notes

- ¹ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 9, p. 422.
- ² al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 77, p. 236.
- ³ Cited by Fakhr al-Razi in *Tafsir al-Razi*, vol. 11, p. 151.
- ⁴ Muhammad ibn Husayn al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Mu'assasat Alul Bayt, 1993), vol. 5, p. 6.
- ⁵ Ibid., vol. 5, p. 14.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 77, p. 165.
- ⁸ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, p. 330.
- ⁹ Ibid., vol. 81, p. 330.
- ¹⁰ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 123.
- ¹¹ A *siwak* is a small stick traditionally used for cleaning and polishing the teeth.
- ¹² al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 77, p. 314.
- ¹³ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 77, p. 315.
- ¹⁴ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 128.
- ¹⁵ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 77, p. 234.
- ¹⁶ *Janabah* is a state of ritual impurity resulting from sexual activity. A person in the state of *janabah* must wash the entire body (*ghusl*) before performing the ritual prayer.
- ¹⁷ al-Saduq, *'Uyun Akhbar al-Rida (A)*, vol. 1, p. 95.
- ¹⁸ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 78, p. 51.
- ¹⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 6, p. 496.
- ²⁰ The public bathhouses used to be divided into four chambers. The first was where people would remove their garments; this area would be cool and dry. The second would have cool water; the third would have hot water; and the fourth and final would be like a steam room or sauna.
- ²¹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 73, p. 70.

❖ On Prayer & Remembrance of Allah ❖

Introduction

Allah, the Glorious and Sublime, says:

And those who are submissive in their prayer. (23:2)

Woe to those who pray, while they are inattentive of their prayer.
(107:4-5)

He censured them because they neglected the prayer – even though they performed it, not because they forgot or abandoned it.

He, the Glorified, says:

Establish the prayer for My remembrance. (20:14)

And do not be of the negligent ones. (7:205)

Do not approach the prayer while you are intoxicated, until you are aware of what you say. (4:43)

This is an admonition about the intoxication of the world (whose rationale has already been elucidated).

The Prophet (S) said,

When someone prays two units of prayer without entertaining any worldly thoughts, all of his past sins will be forgiven.¹

من صلى ركعتين لم يُحدَث فيها نفسه بشيء من الدنيا غفر الله ما تقدم من ذنبه.



The prayer lowers the self to the level of poverty before Allah. You

should be humble and submissive, acknowledging that you are destitute and regretful, stretching forth your hands, and imploring 'O Allah!' When someone does not do this, his prayer is incomplete.²

إنما الصلاة تمسكن وتواضع وتضرع وتبأس وتندم وتقتنع، تمد يديك وتقول: اللهم، فمن لم يفعل ذلك فهي خداج.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

When you perform an obligatory prayer, perform it at its appropriate time, in a way that you bid farewell to it, acknowledging that you will never return to that prayer.³

إذا صليت صلاة فريضة، فصل لوقتها صلاة مودع مخافة أن لا تعود فيها.

The Holy Prophet (S) said,

Allah does not look at the prayer of someone whose heart and body are not both present in it.⁴

لا ينظر الله إلى صلاة لا يحضر الرجل فيها قلبه مع بدنه.

It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (A),

Allah will not punish a person whom He accepts even one prayer or good deed from.⁵

من قبل الله منه صلاة واحدة لم يعذبه.

It is said that the wailing of Prophet Abraham (A), known as the 'Friend of Allah', could be heard a mile away; and that he could be heard humming like a boiling cauldron during his prayer. Likewise, it has been reported about our master, the Messenger of Allah (S), from one of his wives,

The Prophet (S) used to converse with us, and we used to converse with him. However, when prayer-time approached, it was as if he did not recognise us and we did not recognise him.⁶

قال بعض ازواج النبي (ص): كان النبي (ص) يحدثنا ونحدثه، فإذا حضرت الصلاة فكانه لم يعرفنا

ولم نعرفه.

When the Commander of Faithful (A) would perform the ablution, his face would change out of reverence for Allah; and when the prayer-time approached, he would tremble and pale. He was asked,

‘What is with you, O Commander of the Faithful?’

He replied, ‘The time of the “trust” [cf. Qur’an 33:72] has arrived – that trust which Allah offered to the skies, earth, and mountains, but which they declined.’⁷

وكان أمير المؤمنين (ع) إذا أخذ في الوضوء يتغير وجهه من خيفة الله، وكان (ع) إذا حضر وقت الصلاة يتزلزل يتلون، فقليل له: ما لك يا أمير المؤمنين؟ فيقول: جاء وقت أمانة عرضها الله على السماوات والأرض والجبال فأبين أن يحملنها وأشفقن منها.

When praying, Fatimah (A) also used to turn pale from fear of Allah.

When finishing his ablution before prayer, the complexion of Imam al-Hasan (A) would change. When this was pointed out, he replied,

It behoves whoever wishes to approach the possessor of the great Throne to pale.⁸

حق على من أراد أن يدخل على ذي العرش أن يتغير لونه.

A similar narration has also been reported from Imam al-Sajjad. It has also been reported that when he used to perform the ablution, he would turn pale. His family asked him about this,

‘What have you become accustomed to while performing the ablution?’

He would reply, ‘Do you know whom I intend to stand in front of?’⁹

كان إذا توضأ اصفر لونه فيقول له أهله: ما هذا الذي يعتادك عند الوضوء؟ فيقول: أتدرون بين

يدي من اريد أن اقوم؟

Someone reported,

Once I saw him praying, and his cloak fell off his shoulder. He did not fix it until he had completed his prayer, so I asked him about this.

He replied: 'Woe to you! Do you not know who I was in front of? Only the part of the prayer in which the servant is fully present is accepted.'

I said, 'May I be your ransom; we are doomed!'

He replied, 'Certainly not! Allah will compensate for that with the supererogatory prayers.'¹⁰

رأيتُه (ع) يصلي فسقط رداؤه عن منكبه فلم يسوّه حتى فرغ من صلاته فسألته عن ذلك فقال: ويحك أتدري بين يدي من كنت؟ ان العبد لا يقبل منه صلاة إلا ما أقبل فيها فقلت: جعلت فداك هلكنّا، قال: كلا إنّ الله يتم ذلك بالنوافل.

It is reported that Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

When 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (A) used to stand for prayer, his complexion would change; and whenever he prostrated, he would not raise his head unless he had broken into a sweat.¹¹

كان علي بن الحسين (ع) اذا قام الى الصلاة تغير لونه، واذا سجد لم يرفع رأسه حتى يرفض عرقاً.



My father used to say that when 'Ali ibn al-Husayn stood for prayer, he was like a tree trunk; no part of him would move except what was blown by the wind.¹²

كان أبي يقول: كان علي بن الحسين (ع) اذا قام الى الصلاة كأنه ساق شجرة لا يتحرك منه إلا ما حرّكت الريح منه.

It is also been narrated that when he was asked about his state during prayer, he fell unconscious. When he came to, he was asked about that, and he replied,

I continued to repeat this verse in my heart until I heard the divine speaker uttering it. My body could not bear envisioning His immense power.¹³

ما زلت أردد هذه الآية على قلبي حتى سمعتها من المتكلم بها، فلم يشب جسمي لمعاينة قدرته.

It was said that, when the Imam (A) was in that condition, his tongue was like the tree on Mount Sinai which spoke and said, 'Indeed, I am the Lord' (28:30).

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Hope and fear will never combine in someone's heart without necessitating that person's entry into Paradise. If you fully devote your heart during prayer to Allah, the Glorious and Mighty, He makes the faithful people devote their hearts to you and to pray to Allah and assist you in Heaven through their love towards you.¹⁴

لا تجمّع الرغبة والرغبة في قلب إلا وجبت له الجنة، فإذا صليت فأقبل بقلبك على الله عز وجل، فإنه ليس من عبد مؤمن يقبل بقلبه على الله عز وجل في صلاته ودعائه، إلا أقبل الله عليه بقلوب المؤمنين، وأيده مع مودتهم إياه بالجنة.

It is narrated that Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

When the slave of Allah prays, only half of his prayer ascends – or a third, a quarter, or a fifth. Only the part of the prayer in which he presented his heart ascends. The supererogatory prayers have been ordained to make up for deficiencies in the obligatory prayers.¹⁵

إن العبد ليرفع له من صلاته نصفها وثلثها وربيعها وخمسها، فما يرفع له إلا ما أقبل عليه بقلبه، وإنما أمروا بالنوافل ليتم هم مانقصوا من الفريضة.

Presence of the heart

Someone might say, 'These verses and narrations say that when someone prays but is oblivious to what he is saying, his prayer is only accepted to the degree that he was fully present. However, the jurists have only stipulated the

condition of the presence of the heart in the beginning of the prayer. So where is the harmony between these two ideas?’

No doubt, speaking mindlessly cannot be considered an ‘intimate conversation’. Speech reflects what is in the innermost consciousness, and the innermost consciousness can only be expressed when the heart is present. How can one really plead ‘Guide us to the straight path’ (1:5) when the heart is negligent?

No doubt, the recitation, invocation, praise, glorification, beseeching, supplicating, and speaking is done for Allah – but the veil of negligence screens the heart of the servant from Him. He does not see Him or witness Him; rather, he is oblivious of the one he is speaking to as his tongue moves out of habit. How far removed this is from the objective of the prayer! The prayer has been legislated to polish the heart, renew remembrance of Allah, and reaffirm the vow of faith – *this* is the wisdom behind recitation and invocation.

Bowing and prostrating is only for glorifying Allah. How can people glorify Allah when they are negligent? Without glorification, bowing and prostrating are only physical motions of the head and back. Without any difficulty in it, it would not warrant being a test or a ‘pillar of religion’,¹⁶ nor being the line between disbelief and Islam.¹⁷ There would be no reason to give it priority over all the acts of worship, or to require capital punishment for wilfully and deliberately abandoning it.¹⁸

Know that there is a difference between what is accepted and what is sufficient. The acts of worship which are accepted are those which result in a divine reward in the Hereafter and which lead a person closer to Allah.

What is sufficient is merely that by which the servant [of Allah] discharges his obligation, even if he is not rewarded for it.

People differ in their ability to bear the religious obligations. The religious obligations have been ordained in accordance with the capability of the creation – what they can and cannot handle. Therefore, requiring that everyone's heart be fully present in every ritual prayer would be impossible, because most people would be incapable of that, except for a few.

Since this is not possible, it has been ordained that at least in some moments of the prayer, the heart must be present – even just for one moment. Since the most important moment is the *takbir* when one faces Allah,¹⁹ the legislated obligation has been limited to this. Nonetheless, we hope that the condition of someone who is negligent throughout the entire prayer is not like the condition of someone who abandons it entirely, since at least the negligent person keeps up the outward performance and makes his heart present for a moment. How can that not be? When someone talks forgetfully during his prayer, his prayer is invalidated before Allah; however, he is still rewarded for what he has done with respect to his incapability and deficiency.

In the section on beliefs, we explained the difference between inner and outer knowledge, and that the deficiency of creation is one of the reasons which prevents them from understanding all of the inner secrets of the shariah which have been unearthed.

In short, presence of the heart is the spirit of the prayer, and the least of this spirit that must remain is presence of the heart in the initial exclamation of the

glorification of Allah (*takbir*). Lack therein is a loss, but the more that the heart is present, the more that this spirit spreads throughout the prayer. How many living people have no vivacity and are more like the dead. A prayer by someone completely heedless of it – except for the initial *takbir* – is physically enlivened but without inner life.

The six inner meanings of the prayer

Know that the inner meanings of the prayer, by which the true life of the prayer is perfected, are six: presence of the heart, understanding, glorification, awe, hope, and shyness.

1. By presence of the heart, we mean that the heart should be emptied of whatever obscures it, and the person praying should speak through the heart so that his awareness is harmonised with his speech and his actions, and his thoughts do not wander. Whenever his thoughts do wander off, a reminder in his heart should steer him back to what he was doing so he does not become heedless. At that point, presence of the heart has been achieved.
2. Understanding – in the true sense of the word – is beyond presence of the heart. The heart may be present regarding the words but not the meaning of the words. True understanding arises when the heart has encompassed the knowledge behind the meaning of the words. Some people arrive at this station, and some do not, as not all people truly understand the meanings of the Qur'an and the incantations meant to glorify Allah. How many subtle meanings, which may never have crossed the heart before, are grasped

during prayer! Therefore, prayer is seen as a 'restraint from indecency and evil' (29:45). For it is understanding which inevitably restrains a person from indecency and evil.

3. Next is glorification of Allah. Glorification is beyond both presence of heart and understanding, as one person may address another with presence of heart and understanding but not extol him.
4. After that comes awe (*haybah*), which is additional to glorification. 'Awe' refers to a fear which results in glorification, since we do not awe what we do not fear. However, not all fear is awe; rather, awe is a type of fear arising from Allah's majesty.
5. As for hope, during his prayer, the servant of Allah should always be hopeful of Allah's reward, just as he should be fearful of Allah's punishment for his shortcomings.
6. Finally, there is shyness. Shyness comes from sensing shortcomings and feeling guilt over one's sins.

Let us mention the causes of these six inner meanings.

1. Know that the cause of presence of the heart is zealous intent. Your heart will follow your determined intention and will not be present in anything you are not truly concerned with. It will be present in whatever concerns you – willingly or unwillingly. It is innately inclined towards and subservient towards it.

Even if the heart is not present during prayer, it is not idle; rather, it is busy with its own worldly interests. There is no escape or quick fix for this. The heart will only turn its attention to prayer when a person gives full, resolute attention to the prayer; but a person will not give their full, resolute attention to

the prayer unless it has become clear to them that achieving their goal depends on it. This is faith – confession that ‘the Hereafter is better and more lasting’ (87:17), and that the prayer is a means of reaching it. If, additionally, a person truly recognizes the insignificance and despicableness of this world, the combination of this faith and this recognition will result in presence of the heart during prayer.

2. Understanding arises after presence of the heart through contemplation and diverting the mind towards the deeper meanings. Lack of understanding can be remedied the same way as lack of presence of the heart: along with embarking upon contemplation, the person must eliminate preoccupying thoughts. Preoccupying thoughts can be remedied by severing their content – meaning, removing whatever causes them. As long as their sources have not been cut off, the thoughts cannot be diverted, since whoever loves something remembers it more, remembrance of the beloved prevails over the heart. This is why you see that a person who loves other than Allah cannot purify his thoughts for Him.
3. Glorification is a state of the heart which arises from recognising two things. The first is recognition of the majesty and grandeur of Allah; this is one of the roots of faith, for if someone does not believe in His grandeur, his soul cannot submit to glorifying Him. The second is recognition of the insignificance and ignobility of the self, and that the self is but a subjugated, controlled slave. Acknowledging these two notions should result in being submissive, broken, and humble before Allah; these are expressed by

glorification.

But as long as recognition of the lowliness of the self does not combine with recognition of the majesty of the Lord, glorification and humility will not be established. For it is possible for a person who sees himself as self-sufficient to recognise grandeur in others, but this person will not be humble or venerating since this recognition is not linked with the other prerequisite – namely, debasing the self.

4. Awe and fear are spiritual states which arise from recognising the power of Allah and how His authority and will do not require His diligent attention. They also arise from recognising that He could destroy all of the ancients and people today without lessening even an atom's worth of His dominion, despite the hardships and tribulations – which He could have repelled – that the apostles and saints endured. The more one knows Allah, the more one fears and awes Him.
5. Hope comes from recognition of Allah's grace and subtle plan, His kindness, His encompassing benevolence and the intricacy of His creation. It also comes from recognition of the truthfulness of His promise to grant Paradise as recompense for the prayer. When certainty in His promise and recognition of His subtlety and grace combine, hope must inevitably result.
6. Shyness arises when a person senses the shortcomings in his worship and deeds through admitting that he is incapable of ever fulfilling the tremendous rights of Allah. It is strengthened by recognising the defects of the self, its spiritual diseases, its lack of sincerity, the

wickedness of its innermost feelings, and its desire for instant gratification for everything it does, despite knowing the magnitude of what the majesty of Allah has ordained. It is also strengthened by knowing that He is aware of the innermost thoughts and feelings of the heart, no matter how subtle or hidden they may be. Recognizing these things – if they are recognised with certainty – must necessarily lead to a spiritual state which can be called ‘shyness’.

Focusing on the prayer

Know that a believer must be someone who glorifies Allah, fears Him, has hope in Him, and feels shyness and shame due to his shortcomings. After he attains faith, these spiritual states should never leave him; and their strength will be in proportion to his certainty. There is no reason why these spiritual states should leave him during the prayer – unless his sense of contemplation leaves him, his thoughts scatter, his heart becomes absent from invocation, or he is negligent of his prayer. Nothing but destructive, preoccupying thoughts distracts a person from prayer.

Therefore, in order to establish presence of the heart, the remedy is suppressing these thoughts, and nothing can be suppressed without suppressing its cause – whether the cause be external or, essentially, internal.

As for external causes, whatever strikes the ears or appears before the eyes steals away a person’s attention, and, diverted, his thoughts follow it; one thought leads to another, which follow on and on in succession. Although the sight may have been the initial cause of wandering thoughts, afterwards, some of those thoughts caused

others. So a person who is strong and resolute will not be distracted by what befalls his senses. A weak person, however, will certainly be distracted by his thoughts.

The remedy for this is shutting out these external causes by lowering the gaze and being careful not to pray in the bustling streets or on places that are engraved or colourfully dyed. This is why the devout worship in small, dimly-lit houses which are just large enough to permit prostration so they can concentrate more; and the strong-willed attend mosques, lowering their gaze during prayer and do not gaze beyond the area of prostration, as has been narrated. Hence, they behold the perfection of prayer, oblivious to who is on their right or left sides.

The internal causes are more serious. Someone whose attention branches off into the valleys of the world cannot confine their thoughts to one branch of the tree. That person's attention will continue to fly from side to side, and even lowering the gaze will be of no avail, for whatever has already fallen into the heart is enough to distract that person.

Hence, as a course of action, the person must force himself to understand what he is reciting and to preoccupy himself with it rather than anything else. When he prepares himself for prayer, he must be resolute in reminding himself of the Hereafter. He must remind himself how perilously momentous a position he stands in when he stands before Allah and invokes Him, and of his terror in knowing that Allah is aware of everything. Before beginning the prayer, he must empty his heart of everything else that concerns him and allow nothing to remain in his self that could capture his thoughts and set them scurrying off into distraction again. This is the way

to calm one's thoughts.

If this remedy does not calm his thoughts, then nothing will save him, except for quelling the very substance of this ailment within his innermost self. He should see what preoccupations divert his heart from being present. Doubtlessly, he will find that they spring from his concerns, and these 'concerns' come only from his carnal desires.

So let him discipline himself by uprooting these carnal desires and severing those connections. Whatever diverts his attention from the prayer is anti-religion and a soldier of his enemy Iblis [the devil]. Keeping it in check would be more harmful for himself than expelling it, so he should rid himself of it by removing it altogether; nothing else will avail him. All that we have mentioned so far about pacifying the self and returning attention to the recitation is only effective against weak carnal desires and concerns which do not overwhelm the heart.

In the case of strong and burdensome carnal desires, simply calming the thoughts will be of no avail. Rather, you would still have an attraction and an affinity towards them. They would then overcome you until your entire prayer passed by while you were busy with that tug-of-war with your thoughts.

This is like a man under a tree who wants to clear his thoughts, but the sparrows are singing and disturbing him. So he chases them away with a stick in his hand so he can think. But the sparrows keep coming back, and so he has to keep chasing them away with his stick. He tells himself, 'You are stuck in an endless loop, so if you want a way out, cut down the tree.'

Such is the tree of the carnal desires. If it grows high

and its branches spread out, then thoughts will be drawn towards it like sparrows are drawn to a tree – or, rather, like flies are drawn to filth. Chasing them away will be tedious, for however much the flies are chased away, they will return; it is for this reason they are called *dhubab* [literally, ‘the things which are chased away’]. Such are the thoughts and the plentiful carnal desires; seldom is the servant of Allah free from them. They have one source: love of this world. That is the root of every evil, the foundation of every shortcoming, and the fountainhead of all corruption.

People whose inner essences have become entwined with the love of the world, in that they are inclined towards something in it, cannot take provisions from it or enlist its help in the Hereafter. They cannot expect to experience the undisturbed pleasure of invocation in prayer. For whoever is delighted with this world will not be delighted with Allah or invoking Him. People’s concerns lie in whatever delights them; if the delight of a person’s eyes lies in this world, that person’s interests will inevitably be diverted to it. Nevertheless, no one should ever give up the struggle; people should always try to redirect their hearts to the prayer and reduce the things which preoccupy them.

This is the remedy – a bitter remedy which human nature finds difficult to swallow. The malady remains deep-seated, and the ailment becomes irremediable – such that the sages have put all their effort into praying two units of prayer without speaking to themselves about worldly matters and have failed to do so. In this case, there is no hope for the likes of us! Had only half of our prayer, or even a third, been free from devilish

insinuations, at least we could have been among those who 'mingle righteous deeds with others that are evil' (9:102).

In short, holding aspirations for both this world and the Hereafter in the heart is like pouring water into a tumbler containing vinegar. No matter how much water is poured into the tumbler, vinegar inevitably comes out; the two cannot mix.

The call to prayer

When you hear the muezzin's call, terror of the call on the Day of Judgment should fill your heart. You should hasten to prepare yourself inwardly and outwardly, for those who hasten to answer this call now will be called with tenderness on the Day when all is laid bare.

So submit your heart to this call. If you find that it fills you with anticipation and delight, and that it urges you on, then know that, on the Day of Reckoning, that call will bring you glad tidings and triumph. This is why the Prophet (S) used to say,

Comfort us, O Bilal.²⁰ أرحنا يا بلال.

He meant, 'Comfort us with the prayer and the call towards prayer', for the delight of his eyes lay therein.²¹

You should pay close attention to the different sections of the call to prayer and its words. When you hear how it begins with 'Allah' and ends with 'Allah', you should reflect that Allah, glorified be He, is the First and the Last, the Apparent and the Hidden. Upon hearing the call 'Allah is the Greatest', the very core of your heart should venerate Him, and you should look down upon the world and all within it so you are not lying when you begin

your prayer with 'Allah is the Greatest'.

Expel all other worshipped beings from your mind when you hear that there is no god but Allah. Then, turn towards the Prophet, and with full decorum in front of him, sincerely testify to his prophetic mission and invoke blessings upon him and his family.

The call to prayer should set you in motion. Strive wholeheartedly towards that which brings about success and is the 'best of deeds'. Renew your covenant by saying 'Allah is the greatest' and by glorifying Him. End your prayer as you began it, by saying that Allah is the greatest, for your origin is from Him and your return is to Him. Your strength comes from him, and you rely solely on His might and power, for there is no power or strength except in Allah, the High, the Glorious.

Garments for prayer

The place where you intend to pray is like the outermost extent of your garments. Once you have purified it, then purify your own clothing – your innermost garments. Next, purify your skin – your outer shell. But do not neglect your very essence, your core – and that is your heart. Strive to purify it through repentance for and regret over your excesses, and resolve firmly to abandon such things in the future. In this way, purify your inner self, for it is where you witness the worshipped.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said, 'When you purify your limbs with water, purify your heart with God-fearingness and certainty';²² the entire narration has been mentioned in the chapter on purification.

وطهر قلبك بالتقوى واليقين عند طهارة جوارحك بالماء.

Then, after you have hidden your body's defects from

the eyes of the created beings with clothing, recall your (evil) inner secrets which no one is aware of but your Lord. Force yourself to hide them while admitting that no covering can hide them from Allah except for the garments of regret, shame, and fear. With this in your heart, send forth the armies of fear and shame to subjugate yourself abashedly before Allah as a guilty and sinful fugitive who has returned regretfully to his Master with his head lowered in shame and fear.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq says,

The most beautiful garment for the believer is the garment of God-fearingness, and the most blessed garment is faith. Allah the Exalted said: 'And the garment of God-fearingness, that is the best' (7:26).²³

أزين اللباس للمؤمن لباس التقوى، وانعمه الإيمان، قال الله تعالى: ﴿وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ﴾.

Clothing is a blessing from Allah. With it, the shameful parts of the children of Adam are hidden. It is an honour which Allah has only granted to His servants, the children of Adam, and no one else. It is a tool which aids the believers in carrying out the religious duties which Allah has mandated for them. The best clothing is that which does not distract you from Allah and which inspires you to thank Him, remember Him, and obey him. It is the clothing which does not lead you to pride, showing off, primping, arrogance, or vanity; for these are diseases which infect the religion and harden the heart.

As you clothe yourself, remember how Allah conceals your sins through His mercy. Clothe your inner self with sincerity as you clothe your outer self with garments. Drape your inner self with veneration and your outer self with obedience. Reflect upon the grace of Allah, the Lofty and Sublime, for He has created clothing so you can cover

your outwardly shameful parts, and has opened the gate of repentance and penitence so you can cover your inwardly shameful sins and evil traits. Do not expose anyone, for Allah has concealed even greater faults for you.

Busy yourself with your own faults, and overlook matters that do not concern you. Beware that your life does not pass by while you are preoccupied with others, selling your trading capital to others while you yourself perish. For forgetfulness of one's own sins is one of the greatest reasons for divine punishment in this realm, and is one of the most common reasons for divine punishment in the Hereafter.

As long as a servant busies himself with obeying Allah, recognising his own faults, and abandoning things which would bring shame to the religion of Allah, he will be kept away from (spiritual) ailments. He will dive into the sea of divine mercy and succeed in acquiring the useful gems of wisdom and exhortation. But as long as he is forgetful of his sins, ignorant of his faults, and relying upon his own power and strength, he will never succeed at all.

The mosque door

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

When you reach the mosque door, know that you have arrived at a great kingdom; only the purified tread on its carpet, and only the truehearted are permitted in its gatherings. So let your first step upon its carpet be a step in servitude of the Sovereign King, for you are in great danger if you are oblivious of this. Know that He is able to deal with you as He wills – either with justice or with grace.

If He treats you compassionately by His grace and mercy, He will accept your insignificant amount of obedience and, in return, will

generously grant you an abundant reward. However, if, out of His justice, He demands from you His right of trueheartedness and sincerity, He will veil you and reject your acts of obedience, even if they are many; and He does what He wants. Confess your helplessness, shortcoming, and destitution before Him, for you have faced Him to worship Him and be intimate with Him. Expose your inner secrets to Him, knowing that nothing in creation is hidden from Him – neither its secrets nor its outer aspects. Be the neediest of His slaves before Him. Empty your heart of every distraction that veils you from your Lord, for He only accepts the worship from the purest and the sincerest. See in which register your name will be recorded. Thereafter, if you taste the sweetness of invoking Him and the deliciousness of speaking with Him, and if you drink from the cup of His mercy and generosity – since He has turned to you and responded to you, for you have set your service to Him aright – then enter, for you have been granted permission and security. But, if not, then halt there like a desperate person whose efforts have failed him, whose deeds have been insufficient, and whose end has come.

If Allah recognises that, in your heart, you sincerely want to return to Him, He will gaze upon you with kindness, mercy, and compassion. He will help you attain what He loves and what pleases Him. For He is generous and loves to be generous to His desperate slaves who frantically beg at His door seeking His pleasure. Allah, the Exalted, says: 'Who responds to the desperate when they call upon Him?' (27:62).²⁴

إذا بلغت باب المسجد، فاعلم أنك قصدت ملكاً عظيماً لا يطأ بساطه إلا المطهرون، ولا يؤذن مجالسته إلا الصديقون، وهب القدوم إلى بساط خدمته هيبة الملك فإنك على خطر عظيم إن غفلت، واعلم أنه قادر على ما يشاء من العدل والفضل معك وبك، فإن عطف عليك بفضلته ورحمته قبل منك سير الطاعة، وأجزل لك عليها ثواباً كثيراً، وإن طالبك باستحقاقه الصدق والإخلاص عدلاً بك، حجبتك ورد طاعتك وإن كثرت، وهو فعال لما يريد، واعترف بعجزك وتقصيرك وانكسارك وفقرك بين يديه، فإنك قد توجهت للعبادة له والمؤانسة به، واعرض أسرارك عليه ولتعلم أنه لا يخفى عليه أسرار الخلائق أجمعين وعلايتهم وكن كافقراً عبادة بين يديه واحل قلبك عن كل شاغل يحجبك عن ربك، فإنه لا يقبل إلا الأطهر والأخلاص، فانظر من أي ديوان يخرج اسمك فإن ذقت من حلاوة مناجاته ولذيت مخاطباته وشربت بكأس رحمته وكراماته من حسن إقباله عليك وإجاباته وقد صلحت

لخدمته فادخل فلك الإذن والأمان، وإلا فقف وقوف مضطر قد انقطعت عنه الحيل وقصر عنه العمل وقُضِيَ الأجل، وإذا علم الله من قلبك صدق الالتجاء إليه، نظر إليك بعين الرأفة والرحمة والعطف، ووفقك لما يحب ويرضى، فإنه كريم يحب الكرامة لعباده المضطرين إليه اخترقين على بابه لطلب مرضاته. قال الله تعالى: ﴿أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ﴾.

Facing Mecca

When you face Mecca, you turn away from all other directions and face only the sanctuary of Allah. Do you not see that you must also turn your heart away from all other matters except for Allah? Nay, nothing should be sought but Him! The outer movements should nudge along the inner self. They should restrain and pacify the outer limbs into having a single focus so they do not steal the heart's attention. For if, during the movements of prayer, they tyrannise or seduce you, your heart will follow suit and turn away from the face of Allah. So let your heart face the same direction as your body.

Know that, just as the face cannot be directed towards the holy sanctuary without turning it away from all other directions, the heart cannot be turned towards Allah without emptying it of everything but Him.

The Prophet (S) said,

If a slave [of Allah] stands to pray while his desire and heart are directed towards Allah, after he finishes his prayer, he will be like he was the day his mother gave birth to him.²⁵

إذا قام العبد إلى صلاته وكان هواه وقلبه إلى الله، انصرف كيوم ولدته أمه.



Does the one who turns away his face in prayer not fear that Allah would turn his face into the face of a donkey?²⁶

أما يخاف الذي يحول وجهه في الصلاة أن يحول الله وجهه وجه حمار.

This is a clear prohibition against turning away from Allah during prayer and a remark upon its severity. For one who turns right and left turns away from Allah and is oblivious of seeking the illuminations of His grandeur. Negligence becomes an enduring trait for that person. His heart's face will be turned into a donkey's face, for he can barely comprehend the lofty matters or even understand the outward sciences.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

When you face the direction of prayer (*qiblah*),²⁷ despair of this world and whatever and whoever is in it. Empty your heart of every preoccupation that diverts you from Allah, the Exalted. With your inner eye, behold the grandeur of Allah. Remember that you will stand in front of Him on the day when 'every soul will be tried for its base deeds, and all will be returned to Allah – their true Master' (10:30). So stand upon the twain feet of fear and hope.²⁸

إذا استقبلت القبلة فأيس من الدنيا وما فيها والخلق وما هم فيه، واستفرغ قلبك من كل شاغل يشغلك عن الله تعالى، وعاین بسرك عظمة الله، واذكر وقوفك بين يديه يوم ﴿تَبْلُو كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا أَسْلَفَتْ وَرُدُّوْا إِلَى اللَّهِ مَوْلَاهُمُ الْحَقُّ﴾، وقف على قدم الخوف والرجاء.

Standing in prayer

When you stand in prayer (*qiyam*), stand tall before Allah with your person and your heart. Your head, the loftiest of your limbs, should be bowed and dropped. Lowering your head from its height should signify that your heart must be humble, submissive, and free from haughtiness and pride.

Bear in mind the seriousness of standing before Allah and the terror you will feel when you are presented for questioning before the one who is all-aware. Know that

when you stand before Allah, He is fully aware of you. If you are unable to acknowledge the essence of His true majesty, stand before Him as you would stand before a king in our era. While you stand in prayer, imagine that a righteous man from your family (or someone else who you would like to perceive you as righteous) is keeping you under his watchful, sleepless eye. Keep your extremities motionless, your limbs humble, and your body still lest this insignificant being think you lack devotion.

If you sense you are more constant in prayer when you think an insignificant slave of Allah is watching you, then reproach yourself. Tell yourself, 'You are rebuffing the true recognition of Allah and His love! Do you not feel ashamed of your audaciousness against Him? You are revering one of His slaves – a man – and being fearless of Him, while He is the most worthy of being feared!'

The Prophet (S) was asked, 'How should we feel shy before Allah?' He replied,

You should be shy before him like you would be shy before a pious man from your kinsfolk.²⁹

سئل النبي (ص) كيف الحياء من الله؟ فقال: تستحي منه كما تستحي من الرجل الصالح من أهلِكَ.

Saying 'Allah is the greatest'

When you say 'Allah is the greatest' to begin your prayer, envision the grandeur of Allah, the Glorified, versus the smallness of your self. Remember how despicable your worship is in comparison with His grandeur, and how inferior your efforts are to carry out the duties of serving Him and to perfect His worship while giving it its true rights.

Ponder over the words: 'O Allah! You are the true king, with a great kingdom, universal power, and full control over all the realms.' Return to yourself humbled and broken. Confess your sins and seek forgiveness by saying 'I have committed evil and oppressed myself, so forgive me, for no one except You forgives sins.'

Heed his invitation when you perform this act of servitude. Imagine yourself near to Him, between His two hands, and He 'answers the prayer of every supplicant who calls upon Him' (2:186). Hear His call. Remember that what is good in this world and in the next lies in His hands, not in anyone else's, when you say, 'I am here, O Lord, and at your service! All good is in Your hands.'

Deem Him far above committing any oppression or evil. Eternally remember His pure guidance as you say: 'No evil comes from you. A person can only be guided if You guide him.' Acknowledge your servitude to Him, and that He is the foundation of your existence, its beginning and its end. Say, 'I am your slave, born of two of Your slaves, from You, by You, for You, and returning to You' – meaning 'the servant's existence and efforts and possessions are Yours, and he will return to You'. He created everything and will call it back. Keep these realities in your mind. Soften your heart to receive the secrets and subtleties that will be unlocked as you reach the spiritual emanations from the Knower who is above all.

Your intention

When you make your intention for the prayer, be determined to respond to Allah by obeying His command to pray. Perfect your prayer and refrain from shortcomings or things which would harm the integrity of your

prayer. In all of this, be sincere, and seek the face of Allah and His reward; fear His punishment; try to draw near to Him; and adorn yourself with His grace, for He has permitted you to call upon Him despite your ill etiquette and numerous transgressions.

Inside yourself, magnify the importance of whispering to Him. Look to whom you invoke – how you pray, and what you pray for. At this point, your forehead should be sweating in shamefacedness, your muscles should be quaking in awe, and your face should pale in fear.

‘Allah is the greatest’ (*takbir*) means that Allah, the Glorified, is greater than everything. He is greater than anything people can perceive with their senses or deduce in their minds. Thus, if your tongue pronounces these words, your heart should not belie them. For if you hold anything in your heart to be greater than Allah then Allah will testify that you are a liar – even though the words you say are true, just as He testified against the hypocrites for saying that the Prophet (S) is the Messenger of Allah (63:1).

If your whims hold more control over you than the command of Allah, and you are more obedient to them than to Him, then you have taken them as your lord and proclaimed their greatness. It is as if Allah is the greatest only according to your tongue; your heart disagrees and gives its own testimony. What great danger would lie in this were it not for repentance, seeking forgiveness, and our good hope in Allah’s kindness and forgiveness.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

When you perform the *takbir*, belittle all that is between the heights of the heavens and the soil of the earth other than His exaltedness. For if Allah is aware that His servant is performing the *takbir* while his heart is contradicting it, He will say: ‘O liar! Are you trying to

deceive me? By My honour and majesty, I will deprive you of the sweetness of My remembrance and will veil you from My nearness and the delight of invoking Me.³⁰

إذا كبرت فاستصغر ما بين العلى والثرى دون كبريائه، فإن الله تعالى إذا اطلع على قلب العبد وهو يكبر وفي قلبه عارض عن حقيقة تكبيره قال: يا كاذب أتخدعني؟ وعزّي وجلالي لأحرمتك حلاوة ذكرى ولأحجبك عن قربي والمسرة بمناجاتي.

So pay attention to your heart when you pray. If you find the sweetness and joy and pleasure of prayer in your self, and if your heart is glad to invoke Him and delighted to speak to Him, then know that you have truly performed the *takbir*. If not, then know that being denied the delight of invoking Him and deprived of the sweetness of worshipping Him is an indication that Allah has rejected you and dismissed you from His door.

‘I have turned my face towards He who originated the heavens and the earth’

In the supplication recited before prayer – ‘I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, in submission to Him (*muslim*)’³¹ – ‘face’ does not mean your external, physical face, for you have merely turned that towards Mecca, and Allah – Glorified and Exalted be He – is far too hallowed to be found in a particular direction, such that you could turn your physical face towards Him. Rather, you turn the face of your heart towards the one who originated the heavens and the earth. So see what your heart is facing. Is it concerned with its own interests – the home, perhaps, or the marketplace? Is it following its own carnal desires? Or is it truly facing the one who originated the heavens and the earth?

Beware that you do not begin your prayers to Him with a lie, or a story you have woven. You can only turn your face towards Allah when you turn it away from everything else. Strive, at that moment, to turn towards Him; if you are not capable of always doing that, then at least let your words at this point be sincere.

When you say 'truly' and 'in submission to Him (*muslim*)', remember that a true Muslim is a person whose hands and tongue other Muslims are safe from. If this is not true about you, then you are lying; so strive firmly for this to be true about you in the future, and regret whatever has transpired in the past.

When you say 'and I am not one of the polytheists' (6:79), beware hidden polytheism. For His words 'and whoever hopes to meet his Lord should do good deeds and not associate anyone with his Lord in worship' (18:110) were revealed about His servants who sought people's praise through worshipping Him. Drive away this type of polytheism, and feel ashamed in your heart if you thought you were not one of these polytheists, while in fact you were not free from this type of polytheism. For the word *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) applies to any amount of polytheism.

When you say 'my life and death are for Allah', know that this is the condition of a servant who has lost his self and exists only for his Master. It is not suitable for these words to issue forth from someone whose pleasure, anger, standing and sitting (in prayer), desires in life, and fear of death are tied to worldly matters.

Seeking refuge from Satan

When you say, 'I seek refuge in Allah from Satan the

accursed', know that Satan is your enemy. He turns your heart away from Allah out of jealousy, for you can invoke Him and prostrate to Him while he has been cursed for refusing to perform a single prostration. Know that you seek refuge in Allah from him by abandoning what he loves and replacing it with what Allah loves – not by mere words. For when a person is chased by a predator that wants to devour him, or an enemy that wants to kill him, he will not be safe simply by saying 'I seek refuge from you in this unshakeable and invincible fortress'; he must actually enter it.

Whoever follows their carnal desires, which are beloved to Satan and detested by the Merciful, will not benefit from mere words. These words must be coupled with a firm resolution to seek protection from the evil of Satan in the fortress of Allah, the Glorious and Sublime. His fortress is 'there is no god but Allah (*la ilaha illa Allah*)', for He says: '*La ilaha illa Allah* is My fortress.'³²

The person who is secure in this fortress is the person who worships Allah alone. But the person who 'takes his desires as his lord' (25:43) is in the domain of Satan instead of the fortress of Allah. Know that one of his tricks is to preoccupy you during the prayer with thoughts of the Hereafter and doing good deeds so that you do not understand what you say. Know that whatever takes your attention away from the meaning of the Qur'an is satanic whispering, for the goal of recitation is not to move the tongue but to understand the meaning.

People fall into three categories regarding their recitation in prayer. Some move their tongues but their hearts are oblivious. Some move their tongues, and their hearts follow their tongues. They listen to and understand

the recitation as if someone other than themselves were reciting; this is the level of the 'companions on the right' (56:27). And then there are those whose hearts race ahead of the meaning, and they employ their tongues in its service to explain it. The difference between the second and third groups is that, instead of the tongue instructing the heart, the tongue explains what is already in it. Those who have been 'drawn near' (56:11) to Allah are those whose tongues explain what is already in their hearts.

Saying 'in the name of Allah'

When you say 'in the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful', intend it as a blessing as you begin to recite the words of Allah. Understand that it means that all matters are with Allah, and that 'name' here refers to the 'named' since all matters are inevitably with Allah. 'All praise be to Allah' means being grateful to Allah, for all blessings come from Him. If someone thinks that a blessing comes from someone other than Allah – unless he sees that person as an intermediary employed by Allah – and thanks that person instead, that person is deficient in how he says 'in the name of Allah' and 'all praise be to Allah' to the degree that he pays attention to someone other than Allah.

When you say 'the Compassionate, the Merciful', the varieties of His benevolence should come to your heart, unfolding mercy for you and inspiring you with hope.

Thereafter, you should feel veneration and fear as you say 'master of the Day of Judgment' (1:4). His greatness comes from the fact that there is no reign but His; and the fear is due to the terror on the day of retribution and accounting that He is master of.

Then, renew your sincerity by saying 'You alone do we worship...' (1:5). Renew your confession of inability, destitution, and lack of power and strength by saying '...and You alone do we beseech for help.' Realise that you can only obey Him through His support. It is by His favour that you obey Him, serve Him, and are made worthy of invoking Him. Were He to deprive you of this blessing, you would also be driven away like the cursed Satan.

After you have finished saying 'in the name of Allah' and 'all praise be to Allah' and demonstrated your absolute neediness of Him, put forth your request. But do not seek anything except what is most urgent. Say 'guide us to the straight path' (1:6) – the path that leads us near to You and Your pleasure. By saying that, ask Allah to open your hearts and support you. Ask that you be witnessed by those 'who have been favoured' (1:7) with the blessing of guidance, such as the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous – 'not those whom your wrath descends upon' (1:7), such as the disbelievers and the deviant among the Jews, Christians, and Sabaeans.

If you recite the opening surah of the Qur'an this way, it will be as if you are among those whom Allah describes, as the Prophet (S) related:

I have divided the prayer into two halves – one half for Me and the other half for My slave. When the slave says 'all praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds', Allah says, 'My slave has praised Me and glorified Me.' This is the true meaning of 'Allah hears whoever praises Him.'³³

قسمت الصلاة بيني وبين عبدي نصفين نصفها لي ونصفها لعبدي. يقول العبد: ﴿الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾ ، فيقول الله حمدني عبدي وأثنى علي وهو معنى قوله سمع الله لمن حمده.

When you pray, it is more than enough that Allah mentions you – let alone [that you receive] His reward and grace that you hope for.

This is what you should understand when you recite the surahs of the Qur'an (as will be discussed in the chapter on reciting the Qur'an). Do not neglect His commands and prohibitions; His promises and threats; His admonition; the stories of His prophets; or the reminders of His favour and kindness. Each of these has its own right. The right due to the promise [of divine reward] is hope. The right due to the threat [of divine punishment] is fear. The right due to divine commands and prohibitions is determined resolve. The right due to admonition is heeding it. The right due to the reminders of His favours is gratitude. And the right due to the stories of the prophets is taking lessons from them.

The meaning of these can only be understood according to one's level of understanding. Understanding, in turn, depends on accumulation of knowledge and purity of the heart – the levels of which are boundless. And prayer is the key to the heart; through it, the mysteries of the words are uncovered. This is the right due to the recitation of the Qur'an, as is the case for all godly incantations and glorification.

Then, observe the outward aspect of Qur'anic recitation. Recite it at a moderate pace, neither superficially nor rushed, for this will facilitate contemplation. Use different tones when reciting verses about mercy and verses about chastisement, the divine promises and threats, and glorification and praise. When some people come to verses like 'Allah has not adopted a son, nor is there any god besides Him' (23:91), they lower

their voices like someone who is ashamed at needing to be reminded of this. Hence, it will be said to the person who recites the Qur'an, 'Recite and ascend.'³⁴ The more a person recites, the higher that person will climb.

While standing in prayer

While standing in prayer, remember that the heart must also stand upright and give Allah its undivided attention. The Prophet (S) said,

Allah turns His attention towards a person who prays, even if that person is unmindful.³⁵

إن الله مقبل على المصلي ما لم يلتفت.

Just as you must watch over your head and eyes so they do not turn away from the proper direction, you must also watch your inner self so it does not turn away from the prayer. If it pays attention to anything other than the prayer, remind it that Allah is aware of you. And remind it of how hideous it is to attach such little importance to the one you are invoking, simply because you have become negligent due to treating prayer like a habit.

Require that your heart be humble, for the outward sign of sincerity is paying attention, and the inward result is humility. As long as the inner self is humble, the outer self will also show humility. Once, when the Prophet (S) saw someone fiddling with his beard during prayer, he said,

Had his heart been humble, his limbs would also have yielded.³⁶

أما هذا لو خشع قلبه لخشعت جوارحه.

For the flock is under the direction of the shepherd.

Thus, the supplication has been related: 'O Allah, set aright the shepherd and the flock' – meaning the heart and the limbs. This is naturally required when standing before an esteemed son of this world. So how can it not be required when standing before the King of Kings?

When someone stands still out of humility before anyone but Allah but has unsettled limbs when he stands before Allah, this is because he is deficient in his recognition of Allah's magnificence as well as in his recognition of Allah's awareness of his inner self and conscience. Ponder upon the words of Allah:

He who sees you standing forth in prayer, and your movements among those who prostrate themselves. (26:218-219)

Bowing in prayer (*ruku'*)

When bowing in prayer (*ruku'*), renew your remembrance of Allah's loftiness. Raise your hands seeking refuge in Allah's pardon from His punishment, following the Sunnah of His Prophet. Re-establish your obsequiousness and humbleness before Him by bowing. Strive to soften your heart. Renew your humility, sensing the glory of your Master and your own lowliness vis-à-vis the loftiness of your Lord.

Seek the help of your tongue in establishing that feeling in your heart, glorifying your Lord and testifying to His greatness, and that He is superior to any other power. Repeat that in your heart to affirm it by repetition. Then, rise back up from bowing, hopeful that He will extend His mercy upon it. Reaffirm that hope in yourself by saying: 'Allah hears whoever praises Him' – means that Allah responds to whoever thanks Him. Next, give thanks –and when you give thanks, Allah will bestow

more blessings on you – by saying: ‘All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.’ Then, humble and lower yourself even more by saying: ‘O possessor of glory, grandeur, generosity, and might.’

It is narrated that the Commander of the Faithful (A) was asked the meaning behind stretching the neck out while bowing during prayer. He replied,

It means, ‘I will have faith in You even if you strike my neck.’³⁷

آمنت بك ولو ضربت عنقي.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

If a slave of Allah performs an act of bowing in prayer with its complete reality, Allah will beautify it with the light of His brilliance, shade it with the shadow of His grandeur, and drape it with the apparel of His friends.³⁸

لا يركع عبد لله ركوعاً على الحقيقة إلا زينته الله بنور مجائه، وأظله في ظلال كبريائه وكساه كسوة أصفياه.

Bowing comes first and prostration second. Whoever does justice to the meaning of the former will become suitable for the latter. Bowing is for proper decorum, and prostration is for coming closer to Allah. A person who does not master the proper decorum is not ready to come closer to Allah. So bow submissively to Allah, with a subservient heart, awed by His sovereignty. Lower your limbs in humility, fearful of and sorrowful over whatever benefits of bowing may have escaped you.

It is said that Rabi' ibn Khuthaym used to stay awake all night in a single act of bowing. At dawn, he would let out a long sigh and say, ‘Ah! The sincere ones have gone ahead, and we have been left behind.’³⁹

Fulfil your act of bowing by straightening your back

while acknowledging that the efforts you made to serve Him while standing are worthless without His aid. With your heart, flee from Satan's whisperings, plots, and deception. For Allah elevates His slaves in proportion to their humility, and guides them to the roots of humbleness, submissiveness, and subordination to Him according to His awareness of the reverence they have towards Him in their innermost selves.

Prostration

Then, fall into prostration, which is the highest level of submission. Place the most valued of your limbs – your face – on the lowest of things, which is the earth. If possible, do not put any barrier between your face and the earth and prostrate directly on the earth, for this is the best way to inspire humility and to demonstrate subservience.

When you place yourself in the position of humility, know that you have placed yourself in its rightful position and returned the branch to its root. You have been created from earth and will return to it. So, at that point, revive Allah's grandeur in your heart by saying: 'Glory be to my Lord, the most Exalted'.

Emphasise that in your heart by repeating it, for saying it once will leave only a weak imprint. If your heart is softened and your intellect purified, this testifies to your hope in the mercy of Your lord, for His mercy hastens towards weakness and humility, not arrogance or vanity. Raise your head while proclaiming Allah's greatness, pleading for your needs and seeking forgiveness for your sins. Then affirm your humility by conducting your prostration the same way again.

It is narrated that the Commander of the Faithful (A) was asked the meaning of the first prostration. He replied:

It signifies saying 'O Allah, you created us from this' – meaning the earth. The meaning of lifting the head is 'from it, You brought us forth.' The meaning of the second prostration is 'to it You will return us,' and the meaning of lifting your head again is 'and you will bring us forth from it again.'^{40,41}

قال: تأويلها اللهم إنك منها خلقتني، يعني من الارض ورفع رأسك، ومنها أخرجتنا، والسجدة الثانية، وإليها تعيدنا ورفع رأسك من الثانية، ومنها تخرجنا تارة أخرى.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says,

By Allah, a person who performs the reality of prostration shall not perish, even if he just does it once in his lifetime. How successful is the one who is in solitude with his Lord in such a state, compared to someone who cheats himself and is oblivious to what Allah has prepared for those who prostrate: intimacy with Him now, and comfort in the future.

Whoever comes closer to Allah through prostrating well shall never be far from Him. And whoever performs his religious duties badly and ruins their sanctity by attaching his heart to something other than Allah during prostration will never come close to Him. A person should prostrate humbly and subserviently to Allah, knowing that he has been created from the same dust that all creatures tread upon, and knowing that he was made from semen, which everyone finds disgusting.

Allah has made prostration a way for the heart, the inner self, and the spirit to come close to Him. Whoever comes close to Him distances himself from anything other than Him. Do you not see that, even outwardly, a person does not reach the state of prostration without shutting himself off from everything, whereby all that the eyes can see vanishes from their sight? Such is the case for the inner aspect. If someone's heart is attached to anything other than Allah during prayer, then he is close to that particular thing and distant from what Allah desires from him in his prayer. Allah, the Exalted, says: 'Allah has not made, for any man, two hearts within his chest' (33:4).⁴²

ما خسر والله من أتى بحقيقة السجود، ولو كان في العمر مرة واحدة، وما أفلح من خلا بربه في مثل ذلك الحال تشبيهاً بمخادع لنفسه، غافل لاهياً عما أعد الله تعالى للساجدين: من انس العاجل، وراحة الاجل، ولا بعد عن الله أبداً من أحسن تقربه في السجود، ولا قرب إليه أبداً من أساء أدبه، وضع حرمة، بتعليق قلبه بسواه في حال سجوده، متواضع لله ذليل علم أنه خلق من تراب يطؤه الخلق، وأنه ركب من نطفة يستقذرها كل أحد....

The Messenger of Allah (S) said,

Allah, the Exalted, says: 'Whenever I find in the heart of My slave the sincere desire to obey Me and seek My pleasure, I myself will reform him and supervise him. But if someone, during prayer, is preoccupied with someone other than Me, he brings ridicule upon himself by having his name recorded in the register of the losers.'⁴³

قال الله تعالى: لا أطلع على قلب عبدي فأعلم فيه حب الإخلاص لطاعة وجهي وابتغاء مرضاتي، إلا توليت تقويمه وسياسته، ومن اشتغل في صلاته بغيري، فهو من المستهزين بنفسه، مكتوب اسمه في ديوان الخاسرين.

The *tashahhud*

After completing the aforementioned intricate actions – which hold deep mysteries and momentous perils – when you sit for the *tashahhud*,⁴⁴ you should feel complete fear, dread, shame, and apprehension, for all you have performed is nothing compared to what it should have been. Expect your hands to be empty of any good unless Allah graces you with His mercy and accepts your deficient deeds.

Return to the foundation of the matter, the root of religion: cling to the words of monotheism. If you can attain nothing else, enter the fortress of Allah – 'anyone who enters it is secure'.⁴⁵ Testify to His unity, and remember the noble Messenger, the greatest Prophet; bear

witness that he served Allah and to his prophetic mission.

Send blessings upon him and his family while you renew your covenant with Allah by bearing witness to these two things in the *tashahhud* and seek, by them, to establish your sincerity of worship. These two are the primary way to attain the gift of the response of the Prophet. If you send sincere blessings upon him, he will respond to you ten times over; and if only one portion of that response were to reach you, you would be forever successful.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

The *tashahhud* is for the glorification of Allah. So be a true slave towards Him in your inner self – submissive to Him in practice just as you claim to be His servant in words. Through this claim, connect the honesty of your tongue with the purity of your inner self. For He created you as a slave and ordered you to worship Him with your heart, tongue, and limbs; and you actualise your servitude towards Him through [acknowledging] His lordship – by knowing that full sovereignty over creation is in His hands. No one can take a single breath or exist for a single moment except through His power and will. They are utterly incapable of doing the smallest thing in His dominion unless He permits and wills it to happen...

Engage in full servitude, satisfied with His wisdom. Fulfil the obligations He has given you, and obey His commands – and He has ordered you to send blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad (S). So connect the blessings (*salat*) you send upon him with your prayer (*salat*); connect your obedience to the Prophet with your obedience to Allah; bear witness to the Prophet (S) as you bear witness to Allah. See that the blessing of recognising his sanctity does not escape you, lest you be deprived of the benefits of blessing him.⁴⁶

التشهد ثناء على الله. فكن عبدا له في السر خاضعا له في الفعل، كما انك له في القول والدعوى. وصل صدق لسانك بصفاء صدق شرك، فانه خلقتك عبداً، وامرك ان تعبدته بقلبك ولسانك وجوارحك، وأن تحقق عبوديتك له وربوبيته لك، وتعلم ان نواصي الخلق بيده، فليس لهم نفس

ولا لحظة إلا بقدرته ومشيتته، وهم عاجزون عن اتيان اقل شيء في مملكته إلا بأذنه وإرادته...
 قال: فاستعمل العبودية في الرضا بحكمته، وبالعبادة في اداء اوامره، وقد أمرك بالصلاة على حبيبه
 محمد (ص)، فاوصل صلاته بصلاته، وطاعته بطاعته، وشهادته بشهادته، وانظر ألا تفوتك بركات
 معرفة حرمة فتحرم عن فائدة صلاته.

The *salam*

When you have finished the *tashahhud*, present yourself before the master of the messengers, the intimate angels, the other prophets of Allah, the Imams (A), and your guardian angels who record your deeds. Keep all of them in mind when you say 'may the peace (*salam*) and blessings of Allah and His mercy be upon you.' Do not let your tongue utter these words without thinking of the one you are speaking to, lest you make a mockery of it or deceive.

How can you make someone hear your words when you are not even intending that your words reach them? Only by the grace of Allah and His all-encompassing mercy does He allow that to suffice rather than the true obligation, although it is far from the level of acceptability and lower than the height of achieving nearness to Allah.

If you lead prayer for a community, then also intend this *salam* for them – as well as the aforementioned addressees. The people should first reply to your *salam*, and then they should give a second *salam* to greet those whom you have greeted already. If you do this, you will have fulfilled your obligation in the *salam* and will thereby merit more of Allah's kindness.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

The meaning of the *salam* at the end of every prayer is safety.

Whoever fulfils what Allah has commanded and follows the Sunnah of His prophet, sincerely and with a humble heart, will be safe from tribulation in this world and free from punishment in the Hereafter.

Al-salam ('the Peace') is one of the names of Allah, the Exalted. He entrusted it to His creation so they can make use of its meaning with each other – in how they deal with each other, in keeping trusts, in being fair, and in trusting each other's companionship and associating with each other rightly.

If you wish to treat the *salam* correctly and fully, and to carry out the true intent of this requirement, then fear Allah, and do not overshadow your religion and heart and intellect with disobedience. Your guardian angels should be safe from you; do not annoy them or tire them with your ill conduct. Do the same with your friends and then your foes. If someone close to you is not safe from you, someone who is distant from you is even less likely to be safe from you.

Whoever does not give the *salam* its proper due has no *salam* and no Islam and no *taslim* ('sending the *salam*' and 'submission to Allah'), and this person is lying when he sends his *salam* forth even if he broadcasts it throughout creation.⁴⁷

معنى السلام في دبر كل صلاة: الامان، أي من ادى أمر الله وسنة نبيه خالصا له خاشعا قلبه، فله الامان من بلاء الدنيا، والبراءة من عذاب الآخرة.

والسلام اسم من اسماء الله تعالى اودعه خلقه، ليستعملوا معناه في المعاملات والامانات والانصافات، وتصديق مصاحبتهم فيما بينهم، وصحة معاشرتهم. فان اردت ان تضع السلام موضعه، وتؤدي معناه، فاتق الله تعالى ليسلم منك دينك وقلبك وعقلك، ولا تدنسها بظلمة المعاصي، ولتسلم حفظتك ألا تبرمهم وتغلهم وتوحشهم منك بسوء معاملتك معهم، ثم صديقك، ثم عدوك. فان من لم يسلم منه من هو الاقرب إليه فالابعد أولى، ومن لا يضع السلام مواضعه هذه فلا سلام ولا اسلام ولا تسليم، وكان كاذبا في سلامه وان أفشاه في الخلق.

'Those who are humble in their prayers'

Know that purifying the prayer from slips, sincerely seeking the face of Allah through it, and fulfilling the duty

to pray through the esoteric stipulations which we mentioned (such as humility, glorifying Allah, and shyness) is ultimately so that the heart becomes illuminated with lights which are the keys to esoteric knowledge.

Allah says:

The believers are successful – those who humble themselves in their prayers. (23:1-2)

After mentioning belief, He praises them specifically for their prayer, which is connected with humility. Then he completes His description of those who are successful by mentioning the prayer, saying:

They are the ones who strictly guard their prayers. (23:9)

He then says what the result of having such characteristics is:

They are the inheritors who will inherit Paradise where they will abide eternally. (23:11)

First, he describes them as successful, and then he describes them as those who will inherit Paradise.

The Prophet (S) said,

When the believing slave stands for prayer, Allah watches him until he finishes. He shades him with His mercy from the top of his head to the highest heaven. The angels surround him, from where he is standing to the top of the heavens, and Allah appoints an angel to stand above his head and say ‘O you who are praying, if you knew who is observing you and whom you are invoking, you would never turn your face away, and you would never leave.’⁴⁸

إذا قام العبد المؤمن في صلاته نظر الله إليه أو قال أقبل الله عليه حتى ينصرف، وأظلمته الرحمة من فوق رأسه إلى أفق السماء، والملائكة تحفه من حوله إلى أفق السماء، ووكل الله به ملكا قائما على رأسه، يقول: أيها المصلي لو تعلم من ينظر إليك ومن تناجي، ما التفت ولا زلت من موضعك أبدا .

The Friday prayer

The Friday prayer is distinguished by being on a great day and being a great festival (*'id*) which Allah favoured the Muslim nation (*ummah*) with. He made it an honourable time to draw His slaves near to Himself and to keep them away from His rejection and His Hellfire. He urges them to come near through good deeds and covers their shortfalls and carelessness from the rest of the week. He made the Friday prayer the most important form of obedience to Him, and something which must necessarily draw someone closer to Him. In His noble Book, He calls it 'the remembrance of Allah' (62:9), and He distinguishes it from all the other prayers – which are the best of pious acts – by specifically mentioning it by saying:

O you who believe, when you are called to Friday prayer, proceed towards the remembrance of Allah and abandon business. That is better for you, if you but knew. (62:9)

This noble verse, with its points and assertions, gives a lesson to anyone who has a share in the true meanings of these things. One of the most significant of its secrets is how it describes the prayer as 'remembrance of Allah'. This indicates that the highest goal of the prayer is remembering Allah in the heart and summoning a sense of His grandeur into the mind. This, along with similar points, is part of the secret why prayer prevents 'indecent and evil' (29:45).⁴⁹

This can only be fulfilled by giving complete attention to Allah and His majesty. It is remembrance that is 'the greatest',⁵⁰ and 'full of abundance',⁵¹ according to some Qur'anic exegeses – in addition to it being remembrance of Allah in the general sense. So, certainly, paying heed to the Friday prayer is even more important than paying

heed to the other prayers – just as the preparations are for meeting with Allah, standing before Him, appearing in His presence, and gaining success through addressing him after preparing for the prayer. Some of the duties for this day include cleanliness, applying fragrance, wearing a turban, shaving the head, and trimming the moustache and nails, as well as other parts of the prophetic Sunnah which should be performed with a pure and engaged heart: sincere actions with sincere intentions, just as someone would prepare to meet a worldly king.

Do not seek your own comfort or indulgence in carrying out these duties, lest you lose the true advantages you could gain from them, and your loss become apparent. Perform as many of the deeds which you know you will be rewarded for as is possible. Intend to do them if you can; the reward of your deeds will multiply when you intend to do them if possible.

The 'Eid prayers

Keep in mind that the two 'Eid prayers⁵² fall on the day of the distribution of divine rewards – the day of the apportionment of mercy and the downpour of gifts upon those whose fasts and hajj sacrifices have been accepted, and who have carried out their respective duties. So be even more humble during your 'Eid prayer, especially in your supplication to Allah during it. Be humble before and after your 'Eid prayer, and pray that your deeds be accepted and your shortcomings pardoned; and feel shyness and shame at the distressing and disappointing thought of rejection.

'Eid is not a day of festivity for those who simply wear new clothes. Rather, it is a day of festivity for those who

have become secure from divine punishment. It is a day of festivity for those who are free from the fault of engaging in futile disputes and menacing behaviour, and who merit abundant reward by virtue of their righteous deeds.

So welcome this day like you welcome Friday, and prepare your body and heart to approach your Lord and stand before Him the same way that you do on Friday. Perhaps you will be suitable to invoke and be humble to Him. Do not delight yourself on this day with that which you have not been created for – that is, the wares of this world. Rather, delight yourself with the abundant gifts which Allah gives to those who trade in this world for the Hereafter.

Prayers during eclipses and natural disasters

During extraordinary occurrences (*ayat*),⁵³ imagine the terror of the Hereafter: the tremors; the destruction of the sun and moon; the gloominess of the resurrection; and all creatures' fear and dread of being seized, punished, chastised, and annihilated. Pray more, and pray that Allah increases your submissiveness, piety, and fear. Pray that Allah makes you more concerned about salvation from these calamities, returns you to the light after the gloominess, and forgives your errors and lapses.

Repent for your sins in a beautiful way. Perhaps if you are truly broken, if your head is bowed in shame, and you are embarrassed about your shortcomings, then He will look kindly upon you, accept your repentance, and pardon your errors.

Imam al-Sajjad (A) said,

No one fears or dreads the two signs [lunar and solar eclipses] unless they are one of our followers. When they occur, flee to Allah and

return to Him.⁵⁴

لا يفرع للآيتين ولا يرهب، إلا من كان من شيعتنا، فإذا كان ذلك منهما فافزعوا إلى الله وراجعوه.

Imam al-Rida (A) said,

A special prayer has been ordained for eclipses. For an eclipse is a sign of Allah which may either manifest His mercy or His punishment – it is not known. So the Prophet (S) wanted his nation (*ummah*) to seek refuge in their Creator and Benefactor during eclipses to ward off evil and save them from adversity, just as he warded off evil from the people of Jonah when they humbled themselves before Allah, the Exalted.⁵⁵

إنما جعلت للكسوف صلاة، لأنه من آيات الله تعالى، لا يدري الرحمة ظهرت أم لعذاب، فأحب النبي (ص) أن تفزع أمته إلى خالقها وراحمها عند ذلك، ليصرف عنهم شرها ويقبهم مكروها، كما صرف عن قوم يونس حين تضرعوا إلى الله تعالى.

***Dhikr* (remembrance of Allah)**

After completing the obligatory prayers, follow them up with *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) and supplication. Innumerable merits have been narrated about these two things, especially when performed after prayers.

To be beneficial, *dhikr* should be done continuously, or at least most of the time, with presence of the heart; this is the desired fruit of worship.

Dhikr has a beginning and an end. Its beginning necessitates intimacy and love, and its end is necessitated by intimacy and love; what is desired from it is that very intimacy. In the beginning, the slave must take responsibility for turning his heart away from devilish insinuations and towards the *dhikr* of Allah, the Exalted. If he succeeds in establishing continuous intimacy with

Allah, then love of the Invoked is planted in his heart. When someone loves something, he will remember it more; and when someone remembers something more, he will inevitably love it – even if he takes it upon himself to do so.

Thereafter, a person who achieves intimacy with Allah through remembering Him will detach himself from everything other than Him. Everything other than Allah will desert him at the time of death, when nothing but the remembrance of Allah will remain. Whoever familiarises himself with the remembrance of Allah will enjoy its benefits and take pleasure in being cut off from distracting obstacles; for the necessities of life avert people from the remembrance of Allah, but there are no such obstacles after death. It will be as if he has let go of everything between him and His beloved. His felicity will intensify, and he will escape the prison in which he was barred from performing whatever would bring about intimacy with Him.

The slave of Allah delights in this intimacy until he passes on, arriving in the vicinity of Allah, and ascends from remembering Allah to meeting Him.

Supplication (*du'a*) is the core of worship.⁵⁶ Regarding the words of Allah, 'Indeed, those who are arrogant about worshipping Me shall enter the Hellfire humiliated' (40:60), it is narrated that Imam al-Baqir (S) said that the Prophet (S) said,

That is supplication. The best form of worship is supplication.⁵⁷

هو الدعاء وأفضل العبادة الدعاء.

Regarding Allah's words, 'Indeed Abraham was soft-hearted (*awwah*) and forbearing' (9:114), he said,

Awwah refers to someone who supplicates intensely.⁵⁸

الأَوَّاهُ هو الدَّعَاءُ.

He was also asked about the best type of worship. He replied,

To Allah, nothing is more excellent than being asked and called upon for what He has, and nothing is more detestable than a person who is too arrogant to worship Him and does not ask for what He has.⁵⁹

ما من شيء أفضل عند الله من أن يسأل ويطلب ما عنده، وما من أحد أبغض إلى الله ممن يستكبر عن عبادته ولا يسأل ما عنده.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

The most beloved deed to Allah, the Exalted, on the earth is supplication.⁶⁰

أحب الأعمال إلى الله تعالى في الأرض الدعاء.

He too was a man who supplicated intensely. He said,

Supplication is the key to prosperity and unlocking success. The best supplication emanates from a pure bosom and a righteous heart. The means of salvation lies within intimate invocation, and deliverance lies within sincerity. When fear intensifies, flee towards Allah.⁶¹

الدعاء مفاتيح النجاح ومقاليذ الفلاح، وخير الدعاء ما صدر عن صدر نقي وقلب تقي، وفي المناجاة سبب النجاة، وبالإخلاص يكون الخلاص، فإذا اشتد الفزع فإلى الله المذرع.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says,

Observe the etiquette of supplication. Look to who you are invoking, how you are invoking Him, and why. Recognise the greatness and grandeur of Allah. In your heart, perceive His awareness of your conscience and inner self, with whatever truth or falsehood lies in it. Know the paths to salvation and destruction so you do not ask Allah for something which would lead to your destruction, while you reckon it would lead to your salvation. Allah, the Exalted, says, 'People pray for evil the same way they should pray for good. Indeed,

human beings are hasty' (17:11).

Think deeply about what you are asking, and why. When you call upon Allah, you indicate your full compliance with the Absolute Reality; that your heart has melted away through witnessing the Lord; that you have fully relinquished volition; and you have submitted to Allah in all matters, both inner and outer. If you do not meet all these conditions of supplication, do not expect a response. 'For indeed He knows the inner self and what is even more hidden' (20:7). You might ask Him for something while He knows your intention is the opposite.⁶²

إحفظ أدب الدعاء، وانظر من تدعو، ولماذا تدعو، وكيف تدعو، وحق عظمة الله وكبريائه، وعين بقلبك علمه بما في ضميرك، وإطلاعه على سرّك، وما تكون فيه من الحق والباطل، واعرف طرق نجاتك وهلاكك، كيلا تدعو الله بشيء فيه هلاكك، وأنت تظن أن فيه نجاتك، قال الله تعالى: ﴿وَيَدْعُ الْإِنْسَانُ بِالشَّرِّ دُعَاءَهُ بِالْخَيْرِ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ عَجُولًا﴾، وتفكر: ماذا تسأل؟ ولماذا تسأل؟ والدعاء إستجابة الكل منك للحق، وتدويب المهجة في مشاهدة الرب، وترك الاختيار جميعا، وتسليم الامور كلها، ظاهرها وباطنها، إلى الله تعالى، فإن لم تأت بشرط الدعاء فلا تنتظر الاجابة، ﴿فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى﴾. فلعلك تدعوه بشيء قد علم نيتك بخلاف ذلك.

Know that even if Allah had not commanded us to call upon Him, He would still have gifted us with His response if we called upon Him sincerely. So what then should we expect, when He has promised to respond to anyone who calls upon Him with the proper conditions?

The Prophet (S) said,

If you call upon Allah according to the conditions that I have mentioned, and, inside, you are sincerely seeking His Face, then rejoice, for you will be granted one of three things. He will quickly grant you what you have asked; or He will reserve something even more magnificent for you; or He will avert from you a calamity that would have destroyed you, had He sent it upon you.⁶³

قال: فإذا أتيت بما ذكرت لك من شرائط الدعاء، وأخلصت سرّك لوجهه فابشر بإحدى ثلاثة: إما يجعل لك مما سألت، أو يدخر لك ما هو أعظم منه، وإما أن يصرف عنك من البلاء ما أن لو

أرسله عليك هلك.

It is narrated that when Imam al-Sadiq (A) was reciting 'Who is it that responds to the desperate who call upon Him?' (27:72), he was asked, 'Why is it that we call upon Him, but He does not respond?' He replied,

Because you are calling upon one whom you do not recognise and are pleading for that which you do not understand.⁶⁴

لأنكم تدعون من لا تعرفونه وتسالون ما لا تفهمونه.

Desperation before Allah is the essence of religion. Those who pray incessantly while being blind to Allah will be disappointed. When someone who does not recognise the lowliness of his soul, heart, and inner self – all of which are under Allah's sovereign power – prays, he imposes his demands upon Allah. He thinks his demands are prayers, whereas demanding things from Allah is a form of audaciousness against Him.

Notes

¹ A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary texts of *hadith*. However, the narration has also been mentioned by al-Naraqi in *Jami' al-Sa'adat*.

² A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary collections of *hadith*.

³ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 80, p. 10.

⁴ Ibid., vol. 18, p. 106.

⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 3, p. 266.

⁶ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 67, p. 400.

⁷ A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary books of *hadith*.

⁸ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 67, p. 400.

⁹ Ibn 'Asakir, *Tarikh Madinat Dimishq* (n.l.: Dar al-Fikr, 1996), vol. 41, p. 378.

¹⁰ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, p. 238.

¹¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 3, p. 300.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary texts of *hadith*. However, the narration has also been mentioned by al-Naraqī in *Jami' al-Sa'adat*.

¹⁴ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 81, p. 261.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 363.

¹⁶ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 65, p. 332.

¹⁷ Ibid., vol. 79, p. 216.

¹⁸ The author is referring to a fatwa that a person who intentionally abandons the prescribed prayers (as opposed to skipping them out of negligence) is subject to capital punishment on the grounds of public apostasy.

¹⁹ *Takbir* is saying 'Allahu akbar' ('Allah is the Greatest'). It is done to signify the beginning of the ritual prayer.

²⁰ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 79, p. 193.

²¹ Referring to the prophetic narration: 'The delight of my eyes has been placed in the prayer'. Cited in al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 9, p. 422.

²² al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 77, p. 340.

²³ al-Nuri, *Mustadrak al-Wasa'il*, vol. 3, p. 324.

²⁴ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 130.

²⁵ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 81, p. 261.

²⁶ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 81, p. 211.

²⁷ *Qiblah*: Arabic word literally meaning the focus of attention and interest. Conventionally used to refer to the direction of the holy city of Mecca, towards which Muslims face during the performance of the five daily prayers.

²⁸ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 87.

²⁹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 68, p. 336.

³⁰ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 88.

³¹ Referring to the Qur'anic verses: 'For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah....Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds: No partner hath He: this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who bow to His will' (6:79, 6:162-63).

³² This is a Prophetic narration expressing the words of Allah (*hadith*

qudsi), not a Qur'anic verse. It can be found in al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 3, p. 6.

³³ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummal*, vol. 7, p. 277. 'Allah hears whoever praises Him' is a phrase said during the ritual prayer.

³⁴ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 520.

³⁵ A similar narration is related in al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 81, p.

261.

³⁶ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 81, p. 261.

³⁷ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 82, p. 103.

³⁸ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 89.

³⁹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 82, p. 108.

⁴⁰ Referring to the Qur'anic verse: 'From it (the earth) We created you, unto it We shall return you and from it We shall bring you forth once again' (20:55).

⁴¹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 79, p. 271.

⁴² Mentioned in al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 83, p. 136, citing *Misbah al-Shari'ah*.

⁴³ Ibid., vol. 82, p. 136.

⁴⁴ *Tashahhud*: The word literally meaning 'to bear witness' alludes to the 'sitting-position' in the ritual prayer during which the praying individual bears witness to the belief that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad (S) is His slave and messenger.

⁴⁵ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 79, p. 271. The entire narration is that the Prophet (S) said: 'Allah, the Glorious and Sublime, says: "There is no god but Allah' is My fortress. Whoever enters My fortress is secure from My chastisement."'

⁴⁶ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, pp. 93, 94.

⁴⁷ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 82, p. 307.

⁴⁸ An alternate narration says 'Allah turns towards him' instead of 'Allah watches him'. al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 3, p. 265.

⁴⁹ With reference to: 'Indeed the prayer restrains (one) from indecency and evil...' (Qur'an, 29:45).

⁵⁰ With reference to: 'And the remembrance of Allah is the greatest' (Qur'an, 29:45).

⁵¹ Alluding to: 'O you who believe, remember Allah with abundant remembrance' (Qur'an, 33:41).

⁵² Referring to the two major Muslim festivals, one at the end of the month of Ramadan and the other that marks the completion of the hajj rituals.

⁵³ *Ayat* literally translates as 'signs'. Here it refers to occurrences such as eclipses, earthquakes and other natural disasters during which a special prayer becomes obligatory in Islamic law.

⁵⁴ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 88, p. 153.

⁵⁵ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 7, p. 473.

⁵⁶ With reference to the narration from the Holy Prophet (S): 'Supplication is the core of worship.' al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 90, p. 300.

⁵⁷ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 90, p. 303.

⁵⁸ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 466.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 468.

⁶¹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 90, p. 341.

⁶² al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 132.

⁶³ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 90, p. 323.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 368.

❖ Recitation of the Qur'an ❖

Introduction

The Prophet (S) said,

The Qur'an is guidance from deviation, clarification of obscurity, exemption from error, light in darkness, illumination in the graves, protection from destruction, guidance away from temptation, a clear explanation in the face of trials, and a way to reach from this world into the Hereafter. In it is the completion of your religion, and anyone who deviates from the Qur'an ends up in the Hellfire.¹

القرآن هدى من الضلالة وتبيان من العمى، واستقالة من العثرة ونور من الظلمة، وضياء من الأجداث وعصمة من الهلكة، ورشد من الغواية وبيان من الفتن، وبلاغ من الدنيا إلى الآخرة، وفيه كمال دينكم، وما عدل أحد عن القرآن إلا إلى النار.



I will be the first to come before the Mighty, the All-Compeller on the Day of Resurrection with His Book and my household, followed by my community. Then I will ask them, 'What did you do with the Book of Allah and my household?'²

أنا أول وافد على العزيز الجبار يوم القيامة وكتابه وأهل بيتي، ثم أسأهم ما فعلتم بكتاب الله وأهل بيتي.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said as part of his advice to his son, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah:

You must recite the Qur'an. Act according to it. Adhere to its obligations and laws; what it permits and prohibits; what it

commands and forbids. Stay awake in devotion to it, and recite it night and day. For it is a covenant between Allah the Exalted and His creation. Thus, every Muslim must reflect on His covenant every day, even if it is just fifty verses.

Know that the levels of Heaven are arranged according to the verses of the Qur'an. On the Day of Resurrection, it will be said to the reciter of the Qur'an: 'Recite and ascend.' And so he will be in the highest levels of Paradise, after the prophets and the Truthful ones.³

وعليك بتلاوة القرآن والعمل به ولزوم فرائضه، وشرايعه وحلاله وحرامه، وأمره ونهيهِ والتهجد به، وتلاوته في ليلك ونهارك، فإنه عهد من الله تعالى إلى خلقه، فهو واجب على كل مسلم أن ينظر كل يوم في عهده ولو خمسين آية. واعلم أن درجات الجنة على قدر آيات القرآن، فإذا كان يوم القيامة يقال لقاري القرآن: اقرأ وارق فلا يكون في الجنة بعد النبيين والصدّيقين أرفع درجة منه.

It is narrated from Imam al-Baqir (A):

The Qur'an shall come forth on the Day of Judgment in the best of visible forms. It will pass by the Muslims, who will say, 'It is a person, and one of us!'

It will then pass by them until it reaches the prophets, and they will say, 'It is one of us!' It will then pass them by until it comes to the angels nearest to Allah, and they will say, 'It is one of us!' Finally, it will reach the Lord – the glorious, lofty, and sublime – and say, 'O Lord, I made so-and-so thirsty, and this is his reward. I kept so-and-so awake during his nights in the worldly realm. But I did not make so-and-so thirsty or keep him awake at night.'

So Allah, the Exalted, will say: 'Take them into Heaven according to their levels.'

So it will stand, and they will follow it. It will say to the believer: 'Recite and ascend.' So everyone will recite and ascend until they reach their proper place and stop there.⁴

يجيء القرآن يوم القيامة في أحسن منظور إليه صورة، فيمر بالمسلمين فيقولون: هذا الرجل منا، فيجاوزهم إلى النبيين فيقولون: هو منا، فيجاوزهم إلى الملائكة المقربين فيقولون: هو منا، حتى

ينتهي إلى رب العزة عز وجل فيقول: يا رب فلان بن فلان أظلمات هواجره وأسهرت ليله في دار الدنيا، وفلان بن فلان لم أظماً هواجره ولم أسهر ليله، فيقول تبارك وتعالى: أدخلهم الجنة على منازلهم، فيقوم فيتبعونه، فيقول للمؤمن: اقرأ وارقه. قال: فيقرأ ويرقى حتى يبلغ كل رجل منهم منزلته التي هي له فينزلها.

This is narrated from the Prophet (S) with some additions.

It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (A):

The Messenger of Allah (S) said, 'Recite the Qur'an in the tones and voices of the Arabs. Beware of using melodies belonging to peoples who transgress or commit serious misdeeds. For, after me, different peoples will chant the Qur'an in a singing and cooing fashion. The monks' incantations are also not allowed for it, for their hearts are facing the wrong way, as are the hearts of those who admire them.'⁵

قال رسول الله (ص): اقرأوا القرآن بألحان العرب وأصواتها، وإياكم ولحن أهل الفسق والكبائر، فإنه سيجيء بعدي أقوام يرجعون القرآن ترجيع الغناء والنوح والرهبانية لا يجوز تراقيهم، قلوبهم مقلوبة وقلوب من يعجبهم شأنهم.

It is also narrated that when Imam al-Sadiq (A) was asked about the Word of Allah 'and recite the Qur'an in measured, rhythmic tones (*tartilan*)' (73:4), he replied,

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said, 'Express it clearly. Do not jabber poetically, and do not force it into prose. Awaken your hearts rather than concerning yourselves with completing the chapter.'⁶

قال أمير المؤمنين (ع): تبينه تبياناً ولا تهذه هذ الشعر ولا تنثر نثر الرمل، ولكن افزعوا قلوبكم القاسية ولا يكن هم أحدكم آخر السورة.

It is also narrated that he said that reciting in 'measured, rhythmic tones' (*tartil*) means 'being careful to pause in the correct places, and pronouncing the letters clearly.'

It is also narrated that Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

The Qur'an was revealed sorrowfully.⁷ القرآن نزل بالحزن.

It is narrated that Prophet of Allah (S) said,
Recite the Qur'an and weep. If you do not weep, then feign crying.⁸
اتلوا القرآن فابكوا فإن لم تبكوا فتبكوا.

It is reported that Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,
The Prophet (S) said, 'Everything has its own type of embellishment, and the embellishment of the Qur'an is a graceful voice.'⁹
لكل شيء حلية وحلية القرآن الصّوت الحسن.

It has also been narrated that Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,
Among the people, 'Ali ibn al-Husayn¹⁰ had the best voice in reciting the Qur'an. When passing by, the water-carriers used to stop in front of his door to listen to him recite the Qur'an.¹¹
علي بن الحسين (ص) أحسن الناس صوتاً بالقرآن، وكان السقاؤون يمرون فيقفون ببابه يسمعون قراءته القرآن.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) on recitation of the Qur'an

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says,

When a person recites the Qur'an without succumbing to it, without his heart softening and without sorrow or dread arising in his innermost self, that person has slighted the greatness of Allah's prestige and incurred a manifest loss.

Therefore, the reciter of the Qur'an requires three things: a humble heart, a free body, and an empty place.

If his heart yields to Allah, the accursed Satan will flee from him. Allah, the Exalted, says, 'When you recite the Qur'an, seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Satan' (16:98). So if someone empties himself of other concerns and dedicates his heart fully to the recitation, then no distraction will prevent the light of the Qur'an and its benefits

from reaching him.

After he acquires the first two characteristics [a humble heart and a free body], if he sits alone and withdraws himself from the people, then his spirit and his inner self will become more intimate with Allah, and he will discover the sweetness of how Allah converses with His righteous slaves. He will realise His grace upon them and the special, favoured position He has given them through the variety of expressions of His grace and His wonderful gestures.

If he drinks a single cup of this drink, he will never prefer to be in any other state, nor at any other time. Rather, this will encourage him to obey and worship Allah more, because, in this state, he communicates with the Lord without any intermediary.

So reflect on how you recite the book of your Lord, how you respond to its command and prohibitions, and how you abide by its laws. For it is an imposing book; 'no falsehood approaches it from in front of it or behind – a revelation from the Wise and Praiseworthy' (41:42). Recite it in a measured manner, stop (to ponder) at its promises and warnings, contemplate its parables and exhortations, and be careful that you do not lose the meaning in your efforts to pronounce the letters properly.¹²

من قرأ القرآن ولم يخضع له ولم يرق قلبه ولم ينشئ حزنا ووجلا في سرّه، فقد استهان بعظم شأن الله وخسر خسرا مبينا، فقارئ القرآن يحتاج إلى ثلاثة أشياء، قلب خاشع، وبدن فارغ، وموضع خال. فإذا خضع لله قلبه فر منه الشيطان الرجيم. قال الله تعالى: ﴿فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ﴾.

وإذا تفرغت نفسه من الأسباب تجرد قلبه للقراءة فلا يعترضه عارض، فيحرمه نور القرآن وفوائده، وإذا اتخذ مجلسا خاليا واعتزل من الخلق بعد أن أتى بالخصلتين الأوليين، استأنس روحه وسره بالله ووجد حلاوة مخاطبات الله عباده الصالحين، وعلم لطفه بهم ومقام اختصاصه لهم بقبول كراماته وبدائع إشاراته.

فإذا شرب كأسا من هذا المشرب فحينئذ لا يختار على ذلك الحال حالا، ولا على ذلك الوقت وقتا، بل يؤثره على كل طاعة وعبادة، لأن فيه المناجاة مع الرب بلا واسطة، فانظر كيف تقرأ كتاب ربك ومنشور ولايتك وكيف تحيب أوامره ونواهيه وكيف تمتثل حدوده، فإنه كتاب عزيز،

لا يأتيه الباطل من بين يديه ولا من خلفه، تنزيل من حكيم حميد فرتله ترتيلا، وقف عند وعده ووعيده، وتفكر في أمثاله ومواعظه، واحذر أن تقع من إقامتك حروفه في إضاعة حدوده.

What to consider inside the self

When reciting the Qur'an, a person should contemplate on several matters inside the self.

The loftiness of the words. He should understand the magnificence and loftiness of the words. He should understand Allah's grace and kindness upon His creation in revealing them from His glorious throne to a level that His creation could grasp. He should reflect upon how He graced His creation through conveying the meaning of His words – which describe His essence – at a level that His creation could grasp; and how He has manifested His glory to them by concealing these divine attributes in human letters and human words since mankind was only able understand the divine attributes through human attributes.

He has not concealed the essence of the beauty of His words by clothing it in letters. Neither the divine Throne nor the earth could have withstood hearing the words of Allah, for the magnificence of His sovereignty and the glory of His light would have destroyed everything between them. Had Allah not strengthened Moses, Moses would not have been able to listen to His words, just as the mountain could not endure the least manifestation of His glory and was flattened.

This is the same thing that people do when they want to make animals or birds understand their commands – such as galloping or stopping, or moving forwards or backwards. Since they see that animals have a restricted

comprehension of the words that emanate from an intellect such as theirs – with all its refinement, syntax, and eloquence – they bring down their commands to the level of the animals and convey them through sounds that are appealing to animals – such as the cracking of a whip, whistling, or animal sounds – which the animals can tolerate.

Just as the human body is ennobled and valued because it contains the spirit, speech is honoured by the wisdom it contains.

Wise speech has a high station. It exalts people's ranks; it defeats hegemonic powers; it enforces rulings between right and wrong; it is a just judge and satisfactory witness; it commands and prohibits; and falsehood has no power before wise speech, just as a shadow cannot go ahead of the sun. Human beings do not have the capacity to penetrate the depths of wisdom, just as they do not have the capacity to look directly at the sun. However, the sun's rays enliven their sight and show them only what they need to see.

The divine speaker. Another inner matter which the reciter should dwell upon is veneration of the divine speaker. When beginning to recite the Qur'an, the reciter should evoke the grandeur of the speaker in his heart. He should recognise that what he is reciting is not human speech, and that reciting His word is of utmost momentousness.

He says: 'No one shall touch it except the purified' (56:79). Just as its outer aspects – its leather binding and pages – are shielded from touching the outer skin of any human who is not in a state of ritual purity, its inner meanings – due to their prestige and augustness – are also

veiled from the inner heart unless the heart is cut off from impurities and is enlightened with the glow of veneration and reverence. Just as not every hand is fit to touch the scripture, not every tongue is fit to recite its words, and not every heart will attain its meanings.

Additionally, during recitation, the heart must be present, and the mind must not converse with itself. These characteristics are born from reverence. If someone reveres, rejoices in, takes comfort from, and does not neglect the words he is reciting, then the Qur'an has what is necessary to provide companionship to the heart – if it is worthy of that. But how can the reciter seek intimate companionship when he is thinking about something else or enjoying flights of fancy? A person who is happily strolling around in his own thoughts cannot think about anything else.

Contemplation. Another matter is contemplation, which is beyond presence of the heart. For it is possible for the reciter to listen to the Qur'an but not contemplate over it, even if he is not thinking about anything else. And the purpose of recitation is to ponder. Allah says:

Do they not contemplate over the Qur'an? Or do their hearts have locks upon them? (47:24)

This is the reason why reciting in a measured fashion has been recommended, because an outwardly measured recitation will allow for inward contemplation.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

There is no good in worship that lacks understanding, and there is no good in Qur'anic recitation that lacks contemplation.¹³

لا خير في عبادة لا فقه فيها ولا في قراءة لا تدبر فيها.

If one can only contemplate by repetition, then he

should repeat.

It is narrated that Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) said,

The Messenger of Allah (S) stood up one night in front of us and spent the entire night repeating this verse: 'If You chastise them, they are your slaves; but if You forgive them, You are the Mighty, the Wise' (5:118).¹⁴

قام بنا رسول الله (ص) فقام ليلة بآية يرددها: ﴿إِنْ تُعَذِّبُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عَبْدُكَ وَإِنْ تَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ فَإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْغَزِيرُ الْحَكِيمُ﴾.

Comprehension. Another inner matter is comprehension. When reciting, a person should try to clearly understand what the verses are aiming at since the Qur'an includes many things, such as the attributes of Allah, the acts of Allah, the circumstances of His prophets, those who belied faith and how they were destroyed, His commands and reprimands, and Heaven and Hell.

Examples of His attributes include 'There is nothing like Him, and He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing' (42:11) and 'the King, the Sacred, the Peace, the Faithful, the Guardian, the Mighty, the Omnipotent, the Proud' (59:23).

One should reflect on the meanings of the attributes and names so their secrets are unveiled, for hidden meanings lie buried beneath these names – meanings which are only unveiled to the fortunate.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) alluded to this when he said,

I will keep secret what the Messenger of Allah (S) confided in me – unless Allah brings forth a slave (of His) who understands His book and who is eager to seek that understanding.¹⁵

ما أسرّ إلى رسول الله (ص) شيئاً أكنمه من الناس، إلا أن يؤتي الله عبداً فهما في كتابه فليكن

حريصاً على طلب ذلك الفهم.

Examples of His acts are the creation of the heavens and earth and everything else. From His acts, the reciter should understand His attributes and majesty, for actions point to the actor, and the greatness of the act indicates the greatness of the actor. He should see the Actor Himself in the act, not the act itself. Whoever recognises the Absolute Reality will see Him in everything, since everything is from Him, to Him, by Him, and for Him. If someone does not recognise Him in everything he sees, it is as if he does not recognise Him at all. Whoever knows Him know that everything which is empty of Allah is false, and that:

Everything shall perish except His face. (28:88)

As for the circumstances of His prophets, if one hears how they were belied, beaten, and slain, he will understand that Allah Himself is needless of the messengers and those they were sent to. Were He to destroy all of them, His dominion would not be affected. And if he hears of their ultimate triumph, he will realize the power of Allah and His will to aid the truth.

Understanding what befell those who belied the truth, such as [the destroyed peoples of] 'Ad and Thamud, should inspire fear of His authority and wrath. The reciter should realise that if he is negligent or is ill-mannered – and has been deceived by the respite he has been granted – then the same wrath could also descend upon him and execute justice.

Similarly, when he hears the descriptions of Heaven and Hell and everything else mentioned in the Qur'an, he should know that he can never fully explore all that can be understood from it. For these are matters of infinite

depth, and each servant [of Allah] has been given a different portion of them.

And there is nothing green or withered that is not in a clear book. (6:59)

The veils to understanding. The reciter should rid himself of the obstacles to understanding, for most people are prevented from understanding the true meanings of the Qur'an by the veils which Satan has cast over their hearts; thus, they are blind to the wondrous mysteries of the Qur'an.

The Prophet (S) said,

Were it not for the devils hovering around the hearts of the children of Adam, they could have seen the celestial kingdom.¹⁶

لولا أن الشياطين يحومون على قلوب بني آدم لنظروا إلى الملكوت.

The true meanings of the Qur'an rest in the celestial realm. They can only be perceived by the illumination of insight, not the physical senses.

The veils to understanding are four.

1. The first is being solely concerned with enunciating the letters properly by focusing only on how to physically produce each consonant. Satan keeps this attitude alive to prevent people from understanding the true meanings of the Word of the Allah. He keeps driving them to repeat the letters out of fear that they did not pronounce them correctly. Since their only aim is to pronounce, how can the true meanings be uncovered to them? Obeying Satan in such a devilish deceit will only make him roar in laughter.
2. The second veil is blindly and unwaveringly ascribing to a particular doctrine. In this case, the reciter narrow-mindedly follows only what he has heard

from followers of a particular ideology, even though he has never witnessed these beliefs with his own spiritual insight. Fettered by his own blind conviction, he refuses to allow any idea from any other ideology to enter his mind. Then, if a bright spark of meaning shines from afar, but that meaning differs from what he had heard before, Satan immediately rounds on him and insists that he continue adhering to his previous dogma: 'How could such a thought come to you when it contradicts the beliefs of your forefathers?'

3. The third veil is persisting in committing sins, haughtiness, or weakness on account of obeying worldly whims. These make the heart gloomy and rusty, like dirty blemishes on a mirror.

For this reason, the Prophet (S) said,

If my nation (*ummah*) comes to value dinars and dirhams, they will lose the honour which Islam gave them. If they cease to enjoin good deeds, they will be deprived of the blessings of the revelation.¹⁷

إذا عظمت امتي الدينار والدرهم نزع منها هبة الإسلام، وإذا تركوا الأمر بالمعروف حُرِّموا بركة الوحي.

Allah has stipulated that penitence is necessary for understanding and remembering. He says:

An enlightenment and reminder for every penitent slave. (50:8)

None but the penitent can remember. (40:13)

Only those endowed with understanding can remember. (13:19)

He who prefers the wares of this world over the bliss of the Hereafter is not 'endowed with understanding', and so the mysteries of the book will not be uncovered for him.

4. The fourth veil is reading the exoteric exegesis and

believing there is no further meaning to the Qur'anic words except what has been narrated, and that anything else is interpreting the Qur'an according to personal opinion – and 'whoever interprets the Qur'an through his own personal opinion has reserved his seat in the Hellfire'. Such a person has not understood the meaning of 'interpreting the Qur'an according to personal opinion' (*tafsir bi al-ra'y*), nor has he understood what the Commander of the Faithful meant when he said 'unless Allah brings forth a slave who understands His book.' If understanding only involved the outward meaning of what has been narrated, people would not have disputed about it.

Personalisation. Another inner matter to consider is 'personalisation'. That is, while reciting, a person should imagine that every message in the Qur'an is directed personally to him. When he hears a command or prohibition, he should imagine that he is being commanded to or forbidden from doing something; the same with the promises of Paradise and threats of divine punishment. When he hears the stories of the ancients, he should recognise that they are not being told for mere entertainment but rather so that the necessary lessons are taken from them. All stories in the Qur'an are meant to benefit the Prophet (S) and his nation; this is why Allah says:

By this [the Qur'anic stories], We make your heart firm. (11:120)

The slave of Allah should feel that Allah is strengthening his heart by relating the stories of the Prophets – their patience in the face of harassment and their endurance for the sake of faith as they awaited the

aid of Allah. How could he not think this, when the Qur'an was not revealed for the Messenger of Allah (S) alone? Rather, it is healing, guidance, mercy, and light for all the world's creatures. For this reason, Allah commanded all His creatures to thank Him for the blessing of the Book. He says:

And remember the blessing of Allah upon you and what He revealed to you of the Book and wisdom. (2:231)

We have revealed unto you a Book in which there is a reminder for you. (21:10)

So that you may clarify for humanity what has been revealed to them. (16:44)

This provides clear insight for people, and guidance. (45:20)

An admonition for those who fear Allah. (2:66)

Since all of humanity are meant to be the addressees, then, by definition, every individual is being addressed. The individual who is reciting is being addressed as well as all other people; hence, he should see himself as the addressee.

A sage once said,

The Qur'an is a series of messages that have come to us from our Lord as covenants with Him. We reflect on them in our prayers; we familiarise ourselves with them in private; and we put them into effect by obeying the aspects of the Sunnah that are meant to be followed.

Being affected by the verses. The reciter's heart should also be affected differently by the different verses. Every realisation should inspire a different inner spiritual state. His heart should experience ecstasy or fear due to sorrow, hope, and other feelings.

The more complete his inner recognition of Allah is,

the greater the awe and humility that will prevail over his heart, especially since the Qur'anic verses often express restrictions. For instance, whenever mercy and forgiveness are mentioned, they are mentioned with conditions which constrain the person to a particular way to attain it. A person who has inner recognition will see this. An example is where Allah says 'And indeed I am extremely forgiving' and then follows it up with four conditions:

Towards the one who repents, has faith, acts righteously, and is then rightly guided. (20:82)

Another example is where He says:

By the time, indeed humankind is at loss – except those who believe, act righteously, encourage each other towards righteousness, and encourage each other to be patient. (103:1-3)

There again He stipulates four conditions.

When He limits Himself to one condition, it is a collective condition – for instance, 'Indeed, the mercy of Allah is near to those who do good deeds' (7:56). Here, 'doing good deeds' is a general attribute that encompasses all good deeds collectively. Someone who pages through the Qur'an from beginning to end will find similar examples. Once a person realises this, he will realise that he should exhibit awe and solemnness. This is why it has been said 'when a slave of Allah wakes up in the morning and recites this Qur'an while believing in it, he becomes more sombre and less playful; he cries more and laughs less; he works harder with less comfort and leisure time.'

Therefore, the slave [of Allah] should be affected by the recitation in a way that suits the verses being recited. When the verses warn of punishment or deny forgiveness, the reciter should shrink in fear as if he were in the throes

of death. When they mention leniency or promise forgiveness, he should rejoice as if he were soaring with glee. When they describe the names and attributes of Allah, he should lower his head in submission to His majesty and out of awareness of His grandeur. When they mention the preposterous absurdities that the disbelievers levelled against Allah – such as attributing a son or partner to Allah – he should lower his voice, inwardly shattered and shamed due to the hideousness of what they alleged. When Heaven is mentioned, a longing should surface from within; and when Hell is mentioned, his muscles should quiver from fear.

The entire purpose of the Qur'an is to inculcate these states in the heart so they are acted upon. If that does not happen, then the recitation is merely movement of the tongue to produce fleeting letters with no weight. A reciter who recites with his tongue but does not act accordingly is described by these verses:

And whoever turns away from My remembrance shall have a distressing life, and We shall raise him blind on the Day of Resurrection. (20:124)

Thus Our signs [*ayat*, the same word used for 'verses'] came to you, but you forgot them. Likewise, today you too shall be forgotten. (20:126)

In other words, you abandoned the signs of Allah; you did not contemplate over them, and you did not care about them. The person who falls short of acting upon the verses is described as 'forgetful' of them.

The recitation of the Qur'an – its true recitation – engages the tongue, intellect, and the heart. The role of the tongue is to correctly enunciate the letters in a measured manner; the role of the intellect is to interpret

the meanings; and the role of the heart is to take heed and be influenced to practice self-restraint and obedience. The tongue admonishes; the intellect interprets; and the heart is admonished.

Ascension. Another matter is ascension. By this, I mean, that the person should ascend to the level whereby he hears the words from Allah, the Exalted – not from himself.

Qur'anic reciters are at three levels. The lowest level is when the slave feels as if he is reciting to Allah, the Exalted – standing before Him while Allah is looking upon him and listening to him. This level facilitates beseeching, adulating, imploring, and supplicating.

At the next level, the reciter acknowledges in his heart that his Lord is addressing him out of His kindness and communing secretly with him out of His grace and benevolence. Therefore, he feels shyness; he glorifies Allah; he pays heed; and he understands.

At the highest level, in the speech, he sees the speaker Himself; and, in the words, he sees the divine attributes. He neither perceives himself, nor his recitation, nor the grace accompanying it which he is the recipient of. Rather, he focuses his attention solely upon the one who is speaking. The reciter's thoughts are confined to Him, as if he is too immersed in witnessing the divine speaker to consider anything else. This latter level is the level of those 'drawn near (to Allah)' (56:11). The levels prior to it describe the 'companions of the right side' (56:27); anyone outside of these categories is one of the negligent ones.

Regarding the highest level, Imam al-Sadiq (A) has related:

Allah has surely manifested Himself to His creation in His words, but

they do not perceive.¹⁸

والله لقد تجلى الله خلقه في كلامه ولكن لا يبصرون.

Once, Imam al-Sadiq (A) was so overcome during prayer that he passed out. When he regained consciousness, he was asked what happened, and he replied,

I continued to repeat this verse in my heart until I heard the divine speaker uttering it. My body could not bear envisioning His immense power.¹⁹

ما زلت أردد هذه الآية على قلبي حتى سمعتها من المتكلم بها، فلم يثبت جسمي لمعاينة قدرته.

At such a level, the sweetness and pleasure of invocation deepens.

This is why a sage once said,

I used to recite the Qur'an without finding any sweetness in it until I recited it as if I were hearing the Messenger of Allah (S) recite it to his companions. Then, I was raised to a higher level – as if I were hearing the archangel Gabriel recite it to the Messenger of Allah (S). Thereafter, through His kindness, Allah raised me to an even higher level whereby I now hear it from the divine speaker Himself. At this stage, I have experienced such delight that I could never bear to be away from it.

Self-exculpation. Finally, there is 'self-exculpation'. By this, I mean that the person reciting should rid himself of any claim to power or strength. He should not feel self-satisfied or consider himself sinless. When he recites a verse promising divine reward or praising the righteous, he should not see himself as one of the people being mentioned. Instead, he should see this verse as referring specifically to those with true certainty and sincerity, and he should long for Allah to allow him to join their fold. When he recites a verse describing repugnance towards

the disobedient and condemning the delinquent, he should see these verses as describing himself – as if he is the one being spoken to – and feel fearful and anxious.

The Commander of the Faithful referred to this in the sermon in which he describes the God-conscious,

If they come across a frightening verse, they incline the ears of their hearts to it and hear the roar of the Hellfire ringing in their ears.²⁰

وإذا مروا بآية فيها تخويف أصغوا إليها مسامع قلوبهم، وظنوا أن زفير جهنم في آذانهم.

If, when reciting, he sees his own failings, he will be encouraged to come closer to Allah. For whoever sees himself as distant – despite being close – will be gifted with reverential fear which will drive him to a higher level nearer to Allah. However, whoever sees himself as near – despite being far – will be given a false sense of security which will lead him farther away from Allah to a lower level than he is at now.

As long as he looks at himself with the eye of self-satisfaction, his true self will be veiled from him. But if he casts his eye beyond himself and sees nothing but Allah in his recitation, the celestial kingdom will be shown to him, in accordance with his inner states. When he recites the verses of mercy, he will be overcome with delight, and an image of Paradise will be revealed to him; he will see it as if he is looking at it with his own two eyes. And if fear overcomes him, the Hellfire will be revealed to him, and he will see the different types of chastisement.

For the Word of Allah is multifarious. It is easy and gentle; severe and powerful; encouraging and frightening. This is because His attributes include mercy and vengeance, kindness and power. So the reciter's heart will incline towards the different states according to what he

is reciting. In each state, he should be prepared for an appropriate mystical unveiling, as the listener cannot be in one state while something else is being heard. Speaking of divine satisfaction is not the same as speaking of divine anger. Speaking of divine blessings is not the same as speaking of divine vengeance. And speaking of divine power is not the same as speaking of divine kindness.

Notes

- ¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 600.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 15, p. 171.
- ⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 602.
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 614.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 89, p. 191.
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 190.
- ¹⁰ The fourth Shi'a Imam.
- ¹¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 616.
- ¹² al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 28.
- ¹³ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 75, p. 75.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., vol. 16, p. 293.
- ¹⁵ A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary books of *hadith*.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., vol. 56, p. 163.
- ¹⁷ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 3, p. 183.
- ¹⁸ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 89, p. 107.
- ¹⁹ A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary texts of *hadith*. However, the narration has also been mentioned by al-Naraqī in *Jami' al-Sa'adat*.
- ²⁰ al-Radi, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 2, p. 162.

❖ Zakat & Charity ❖

Introduction

Allah says:

Establish prayer and give the *zakat* tax. (2:110)

The Prophet (S) said,

If the *zakat* tax is withheld, the earth will withhold its prosperity.¹

إذا مُنعت الزكاة منعت الارض بركاتها.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Allah, the Exalted, has coupled the *zakat* tax with prayer by saying, 'Establish prayer and give the *zakat* tax' (2:110). So whoever establishes the prayer but does not give *zakat* has not upheld the prayer.²

إن الله تعالى قرن الزكاة بالصلاة، قال: ﴿وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ﴾، فمن أقام الصلاة ولم يؤت الزكاة فلم يقم الصلاة.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Allah, the Exalted, has not mandated anything upon the Muslim nation more important than the *zakat*. Many of them will perish because of (neglecting) it.³

ما فرض الله تعالى على هذه الامة شيئاً أشد عليهم من الزكاة، وفيها تملك عامتهم.



Whoever withholds a single cent (lit. *qirat*, meaning one-sixteenth of a *dirham*) of the *zakat* is neither a believer nor a Muslim. This is what He said [regarding the ones who will say]: 'O Lord, return me to the world so I might perform the righteous deeds that I had abandoned' (23:100).⁴

من منع قيراطاً من الزكاة فليس بمؤمن ولا مسلم وهو قوله تعالى: ﴿رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ * لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ﴾.



Every wealthy person who has gold or silver but does not give *zakat* on his wealth will be imprisoned by Allah on the Day of Resurrection in the depths with a terrifying, poisonous serpent chasing him. In vain, he will try to flee, but there will be no escape, and the serpent will gnaw at his hand like a radish-plant is nibbled on. Then a collar will be placed around his neck, as Allah says: 'Whatever they stingily withheld shall be clasped around their necks on the Day of Judgment' (3:180).

Every wealthy person who has camels, sheep, or cattle but does not give *zakat* on his wealth will be imprisoned by Allah on the Day of Resurrection in the depths with every creature with cloven hooves trampling him and every fanged creature snapping at him.⁵

ما من ذي مال ذهب أو فضة يمنع زكاة ماله، إلا حبسه الله يوم القيامة بقاع قرقر وسلط عليه شجاعاً أقرع يريدته وهو يحيد عنه، فإذا رأى أنه لا يتخلص منه أمكنه من يده، فقضمها كما يقضم الفجل، ثم يصير طوقاً في عنقه، وذلك قول الله تعالى: ﴿سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا بَخِلُوا بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ﴾. ما من ذي مال إبل أو غنم أو بقر يمنع زكاة ماله إلا حبسه الله يوم القيامة بقاع قرقر، يطأه كل ذات ظلف لظلفها وينهشه كل ذات ناب بنابها.

If someone owns wealth in the form of date palms, vineyards, or farmland and withholds the *zakat* tax from the produce, that sin arising from that land and all the land down to the seventh [layer of the] earth will be hung from his neck until the Day of Resurrection.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) also said,

Zakat was established as a trial for the rich and a provision for the needy. If all the Muslims paid *zakat* on their wealth, there would be no needy or impoverished Muslims; they would manage with what Allah has decreed. People are only impoverished, needy, hungry, and unclothed because of the sins of the wealthy; and so Allah has full right to deny His mercy from those who withhold the right of Allah in their wealth. I swear by He who created Creation and spread forth sustenance, no wealth on the land or in the sea has ever perished unless *zakat* was abandoned; and no prey is caught on the land or in the sea unless it abandoned the glorification of Allah on that day. The most beloved of people to Allah is the one who is most generous in sufficing others, and the most generous of people is the one who pays the *zakat* of his wealth and is not stingy in paying the believers what Allah has ordained that he pay.⁶

إنما وضعت الزكاة اختياراً للأغنياء، ومعونة للفقراء، ولو أن الناس أدوا زكاة أموالهم ما بقي مسلم فقيراً محتاجاً ولا استغنى بما فرض الله له، وإن الناس ما افتقروا ولا احتاجوا ولا جاعوا ولا عروا إلا بذنوب الأغنياء، وحقيق على الله أن يمنع رحمته ممن منع حق الله في ماله. وأقسم بالذي خلق الخلق وبسط الرزق: إنه ما ضاع مال في بر ولا بحر إلا بترك الزكاة، وما صيد صيد في بر ولا بحر إلا بتركه التسبيح في ذلك اليوم. وإن أحب الناس إلى الله تعالى أسخاهم كفاً وأسخرى الناس من أذى زكاة ماله ولم يخل على المؤمنين بما افترض الله لهم في ماله.



Allah has taken account of wealth and the needy, and it was found that twenty-five out of every thousand dirhams suffices them. Had this not been sufficient for them, He would have increased it.⁷

إن الله حسب الأموال والمساكين فوجد ما يكفيهم من كل ألف خمسة وعشرين درهماً ولو لم يكفهم لزداهم.

It is also narrated:

[The Imam (A)] said, 'No one deserves to be praised for paying *zakat*, as *zakat* is an obvious requirement. Instead, by giving it, he saves his own self and warrants being called a Muslim. If he does not fulfil his obligation to pay *zakat*, his prayers will not be answered. And there is something beyond *zakat* which is obligatory on your wealth.'

It was asked, 'May Allah make you prosper! What is required beyond the *zakat*?'

He replied, 'Allah be glorified! Have you not heard Allah, the Exalted, say in His book: 'and those in whose wealth is a determined right, for the beggar and the deprived' (70:24-25).

He was asked, 'So what is this "determined right" that is upon us?'

He replied, 'By Allah, it is some of his wealth that a person sets aside to give away— either every day, every Friday, or every month – a little or a lot, but consistently. And He, the Exalted, also says "and they hold back charitable assistance" (107:7). This refers to a loan they could offer, an act of kindness they could perform, or household goods they could lend – and *zakat* is one of these [rights].'

He was asked, 'We have neighbours that break whatever household goods we lend them. Is it a sin if we do not let them borrow them?'

The Imam (A) replied, 'No, it is not a sin if you refuse to lend things to them when they are like that.'

Then he was asked about the verse 'and they feed, out of love for Him, the pauper, the orphan, and captive' (76:8), and he replied: 'This is not part of the *zakat*.'

Then he was asked about the verse 'they spend their wealth night and day, secretly and openly' (2:274), and he replied: 'This is not part of the *zakat*.'

Then he was asked about the verse 'If you give charity openly, it is a blessing; and if you hide it when you give it to the poor, it is better for you', and he said, 'This is not part of the *zakat*.'⁸

وقال (ع): إن الزكاة ليس يحمدها صاحبها، وإنما هو شيء ظاهر، إنما حقن بها دمه وسمي بها مسلماً، ولو لم يؤدها لم تقبل له صلاة، وإن عليكم في أموالكم غير الزكاة. فقيل: أصلحك الله، وما علينا في أموالنا غير الزكاة؟ فقال: سبحان الله، أما تسمع الله تعالى يقول في كتابه: ﴿وَالَّذِينَ فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُومٌ * لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ﴾.

قيل: فماذا الحق المعلوم الذي علينا؟ قال: هو الشيء يعمل به الرجل في ماله يعطيه في اليوم، أو في الجمعة، أو في الشهر، قل أو كثر، غير أنه يدوم عليه، وقوله تعالى ﴿وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ﴾ قال: هو

القرض يقرضه، والمعروف يصنعه، ومتاع البيت يعيره، ومنه الزكاة.

فَقِيلَ: إِنْ لَنَا جِيرَانًا إِذَا أَعْرَضْنَا عَنْهُمْ مَتَاعًا أَنْكَرُوهُ [كَسَرُوهُ خ] وَأَفْسَدُوهُ، فَهَلْ لَنَا جَنَاحٌ أَنْ نَمْنَعَهُمْ؟ فَقَالَ: لَا، لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جَنَاحٌ أَنْ تَمْنَعُوهُمْ إِذَا كَانُوا كَذَلِكَ، قَالَ: قُلْتُ لَهُ: ﴿وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَى حَيْثُ مَسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا﴾ قَالَ: لَيْسَ مِنَ الزَّكَاةِ، قِيلَ: قَوْلُهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ﴿الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً﴾ قَالَ: لَيْسَ مِنَ الزَّكَاةِ، قِيلَ: ﴿إِنْ تُبْدُوا الصَّدَقَاتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ وَإِنْ تُخْفَوْهَا وَتُؤْتُوهُا الْفُقَرَاءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ﴾ قَالَ: لَيْسَ مِنَ الزَّكَاةِ.

He has also said,

Allah has only granted you surplus in your wealth so that you send it where Allah, the Exalted, intended it to go – not so that you merely amass it.⁹

إِنَّمَا أَعْطَاكُمْ اللَّهُ هَذَا الْفُضُولَ مِنَ الْأَمْوَالِ لِتُوجِّهَهَا حَيْثُ وَجَّهَهَا اللَّهُ تَعَالَى وَلَمْ يُعْطِكُمُوهَا لِتَكْتَنُزُوهَا.

He was once asked: 'How much *zakat* must be paid on wealth?' He replied,

Overtly, it is twenty-five out of every thousand. But its inner meaning is that you do not take possession of anything which your brother needs more than you do.¹⁰

أَمَّا الظَّاهِرَةُ فَفِي كُلِّ أَلْفٍ خَمْسَةٌ وَعِشْرُونَ وَأَمَّا الْبَاطِنَةُ فَلَا تَسْتَأْثِرُ عَلَى أَخِيكَ بِمَا هُوَ أَحْوَجُ مِنْكَ.

Spending well

Ma'ruf means to spend on yourself and your family, and then to spend on the relatives that you must maintain relations with. After that, it is to spend on those who have a 'determined right' (70:24) in people's wealth; to give all forms of charity and be generous to the poor; to offer hospitality to and give gifts to the rich; to aid others, and so on. It also includes spending in order to bring about good and repel evil – in religious or worldly matters, as

long as they are sanctioned by religious law; and spending for the common good, like building a mosque and so on; or specifically to guide those who are astray and to provide instruction. Also included are spending to guard a woman's chastity and uprightness; fulfilling the needs of a believer; easing the burden of debt on a person or even easing the load on an animal; speaking pleasantly and taking steps towards establishing prayer; being generous to your family; smiling at your brother; lending necessary items; silencing a poet [who spreads corruption by his words], and so on.

Perhaps all of this can be called 'charity' (*sadaqah*) and is the same as 'generosity'. It has been said that every gracious act is a form of charity, and the word 'benefaction' (*birr*) encompasses all of these. It has also been said that 'benefaction' refers to anything not included under 'charity'. It is narrated [that Imam al-Baqir said],

Benefaction and charity banish poverty, increase the giver's lifespan, and protect the giver from an evil end.¹¹

البر والصدقة يفيان الفقر، ويزيدان في العمر، ويدفعان عن صاحبهما ميتة سوء.

It is narrated that good deeds protect against evils.

A balance between two extremes has been stipulated for spending. Allah says:

And those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor stingy, but observe a just balance between those two. (25:67)

It is reported that,

Imam al-Sadiq (A) recited this verse then picked up a handful of pebbles, closed his fist, and said, 'This is the stinginess that Allah mentions in His book'.

He then picked up another handful, and the pebbles overflowed and fell out of his hand. He said, 'This is extravagance.'

He then picked up another handful, let go of some, held on to the remaining ones, and said, 'This is the "just balance"'.¹²

عن الصادق (ع) انه تلا هذه الآية فأخذ قبضة من حصي فقبضها بيده وقال: هذا الاقتار الذي ذكره الله في كتابه، ثم أخذ قبضة اخرى، فأرخى كفه كلها، ثم قال: هذا الاسراف، ثم أخذ قبضة اخرى فأرخى بعضها وامسك بعضها وقال: هذا القوام.

There is nothing wrong with a person holding on to his wealth, foreseeing times of need or special occasions when he can spend it in a good way. When he saves money this way, he intends to spend only what he needs – as opposed to spending luxuriously on what is beyond his needs – and to spend for the sake of good, regardless of how it may seem outwardly.

The Holy Prophet (S) said,

The best charity is charity that is given after acquiring wealth.¹³

أفضل الصدقة صدقة عن ظهر غنى.

By this, he meant that it should be given after sufficient wealth and provisions have been acquired so that the heart is not attached to what is being given.

He also said,

The best charity is charity which is a surplus from the palm of the hand.¹⁴

أفضل الصدقة صدقة يكون عن فضل الكف.

– meaning that it is given from what remains after someone pays their expenses.

And he said,

Allah does not blame a person for spending what is necessary.¹⁵

ولا يلوم الله على الكفاف.

– meaning for acquiring whatever wealth is necessary for life.

The effect of *zakat* on the giver

Know that the secret behind the obligation to pay *zakat* and to spend one's wealth is that this obligation is meant to test the slave of Allah. This test has three aspects.

First, pronouncing the testimonial of faith – acknowledging divine unity (*tawhid*) and that nothing is worthy of worship but Him – has a condition, and that condition is that a person must be faithful to these testimonies. A true monotheist loves no one except the One and Only, for true love cannot be shared.

Professing monotheism merely by the tongue is of little use. He tests how much love we have by separating us from the things that we love. Wealth is beloved to the creation because it is a tool for them to enjoy this worldly life. Because of it, they are attached to this realm and flee death, even though in death lies the meeting with the true Beloved. Thus they are tested regarding the sincerity of their claims of love when they are asked to relinquish their wealth which they value and desire. For this reason, Allah said:

Allah has purchased the souls and wealth of the believers, for they will have Paradise. (9:111)

Second, *zakat* purifies a person from stinginess, which is one of the most destructive characteristics. The Prophet (S) said,

Three things are extremely destructive: obeying greed, following whims, and admiring the self.¹⁶

ثلاث مهلكات، شح مطاع، وهوى متبع، واعجاب المرء بنفسه .

Allah says:

Those who curtail the covetousness of their own souls are the successful. (64:16)

Stinginess can only be removed by habituating the self to giving away wealth, since love for a thing can only be severed by forcing the self to separate itself from it loves until it becomes habituated to the separation. The expenditure of wealth purifies the spender from the destructive blemish of stinginess. He is purified in proportion to how much wealth he gives away, in proportion to his happiness at spending it, and in proportion to his delight in exchanging his wealth for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted.

Third, *zakat* is a form of gratitude for blessings. Allah has bestowed His slaves with blessings, in themselves and in their wealth. The acts of worship carried out by the physical body are an expression of gratitude for the blessing of the physical body, and the acts of worship relating to wealth are an expression of gratitude for the blessing of wealth. How vile is a person who looks upon a pauper – seeing how strained his circumstances are and how the pauper is needier than himself – and does not allow himself to exercise thankfulness to Allah for making him needless of begging!

Giving charity

The opportunity to dispense with wealth should be seized

whenever a person feels an inner call to do good, for this is an invitation from the Ultimate Sovereign. "The heart of the believer is between two fingers of the All-Merciful"¹⁷ – how fast it fluctuates! Satan has a call too and, after the invitation from the Ultimate Sovereign, Satan makes his call, warning people of poverty and urging them towards immorality and evil.

The poor person should not have to ask for aid. As is said, when someone asks for money, giving it becomes more like a payment instead of a kindness. A person should allocate a special, superior time to give, such as the month of Ramadan (especially its final ten days), or the month of Dhu al-Hijjah (especially its first ten days), or the day of Ghadir;¹⁸ and he should give in such a way that his left hand does not know what his right hand is giving.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Charity given in secrecy is better than charity given publicly.¹⁹

الصدقة في السر أفضل من الصدقة في العلانية.

When night fell, he used to go outside for a third of the night with a sack full of bread, meat, and money. He used to carry it on the back of his neck and take it to those in need in the city of Medina. He used to divide it among them without them knowing who it was. Only when he passed away and his charity was missed did they realise that in fact it was Abu 'Abd Allah (Imam al-Sadiq (A)).

It has been reported that the Prophet (S) said,

Charity in secrecy extinguishes the wrath of the Lord.²⁰

صدقة السر تطفئ غضب الرب.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

It is better to fulfil the obligations which Allah has made mandatory upon you publicly instead of secretly. And it is better to perform voluntary good deeds secretly instead of publicly. Were a man to carry the *zakat* of his wealth on his shoulder openly, that would be a beautiful good deed.²¹

كلما فرض الله عليك، فاعلانه افضل من اسراره، وكلما كان تطوعاً فاسراره أفضل من إعلانته، فلو أن رجلاً حمل زكاة ماله على عاتقه علانية، كان ذلك حسناً جميلاً.

Regarding the verse 'but if you conceal it and give it to the poor, this is better for you' (2:271), he said,

This is about other than the [obligatory] *zakat* tax.²²

هي سوى الزكاة.

The Prophet (S) was once asked, 'What is the best kind of charity?' He replied:

When you are charitable while are healthy and desire your wealth. You expect to live on and fear poverty. You do not wait until 'the soul reaches the throat' (56:83) to say 'this should go to so-and-so' and 'that should go to so-and-so'.²³

سئل النبي (ص) أي الصدقة أفضل؟ قال: أن تصدق وأنت صحيح شحيح تأمل البقاء وتحشى الفاقة ولا تمهل حتى ﴿إِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْخُلُوفُ﴾ قلت لفلان كذا ولفلان كذا.

The giver should deem his donation little so that it will be regarded as great before Allah. He should remember Allah's blessing [in enabling him to give] and His reward. Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

I have seen that charitable giving is not wholesome unless it has three characteristics: the donor undervalues it, conceals it, and hastens to give it. If you deem it little, it will be magnified in the eyes of the recipient. If you conceal it, you will perfect it. And if you hasten to give it, you will have made it beneficial and salutary. Otherwise, you will have rendered it void and spoiled it.²⁴

رأيت المعروف لا يصلح إلا بثلاث خصال: تصغيره، وستره، وتعجيله، فإنك إذا صغرت عظمته

عند من تضعه إليه وإذا سترته قمته، وإذا عجلته هنأته، وإن كان غير ذلك محقته ونكدته.

A person should give what is best, what he loves most, and what is rarest. Allah rebukes people by saying:

And they attribute to Allah what they hate (for themselves). (16:62)

You shall not attain goodness until you give away from that which you love. (3:92)

Give out of the good things that you have earned and from what We have brought forth for you from the earth. Do not aim for the repugnant things that you would give away, while you yourself would not accept it except with closed eyes. (2:267)

That is, you would only accept it with abhorrence and shame. This is what is meant by 'with closed eyes', so do not choose such a thing for your Lord. When you give, you should make the recipient free from need, if possible; this is why it is related,

When you give, make the recipient free from need.²⁵

After giving, kiss the hand of the one you have given your wealth to, for there lies the hand of Allah. Did not the Commander of the Faithful say:

When you give to a beggar, bring his hand to your mouth and kiss it, for Allah accepts it before you have finished placing it in the beggar's hand. He accepts charity.²⁶

إذا ناولتم السائل فليرد الذي يناوله يده إلى فيه فيقبلها، فإن الله تعالى يأخذها قبل أن تقع في يده فإنه تعالى يأخذ الصدقات.

The Messenger of Allah (S) said,

'When a believer gives charity, it does not reach the hand of the beggar until it is first placed in the hand of Allah.'

He then recited this verse: 'Do they not know that it is Allah who accepts the repentance of His slaves and receives their charity? And

indeed Allah is Oft-returning, the Merciful' (9:104).

قال رسول الله (ص): ما تقع صدقة المؤمن في يد السائل حتى تقع في يد الله. ثم تلا هذه الآية: ﴿أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Allah, the Exalted, says: 'When something is paid to someone other than Me, I retain none of it – except in the case of charity. For I seize it with My hand and snatch it quickly – whether a man or a woman donates it, and even if it is just a dried-up date or part of a dried-up date. Then I nurture it and cause it to grow as someone would nurture a foal or young camel. Then when the giver meets Me on the Day of Resurrection, the charity will have grown to the size of Mount Uhud or even greater.²⁷

إن الله تعالى يقول: ما من شيء إلا وقد وكلت به من يقبضه غيري، إلا الصدقة، فإني ألتقفها بيدي تلقفاً، حتى أن الرجل ليتصدق، أو المرأة لتصدق بالتمرة أو بشق قررة، فاربيها له كما يري الرجل فلوله وفصيله، فيلقاني يوم القيامة وهي مثل جبل أحد وأعظم من أحد.

Request the recipient to pray for you, because his supplication will be responded to. To increase your reward, spend more on someone who is sincere, knowledgeable, and righteous. Give to someone who sees all blessings as arising from Allah, hides his need, is impoverished for the sake of Allah, and is unable to perform his religious duties because of an ailment, need, or his constrained livelihood.

However, the people of true knowledge and faith go beyond merely giving the obligatory *Zakat* tax and charity, for they are considered to be the filthy residue from one's wealth. It has been narrated in this regard,

Would anyone of you like to wash his hand (from filth) and then put that (filth) on his fellow believing brother? The filth of sins is worse than the filth of the physical body.²⁸

أحب أحدكم أن يغسل يده ثم يصبه على أخيه المؤمن، إن وسخ الذنوب أعظم من وسخ البدن.

Hence these people liberally bestow gifts and prayers (upon others). They give first to their dependents, then their near ones, then the most important ones. Thus it has been narrated (from the Holy Prophet),

The best (gift) should go to the relative who bears a grudge.

أفضلها على ذي الرحم الكاشح.

– meaning a resentful relative – as this would be in opposition to one's egoistic whims.

It is narrated (from the Holy Prophet):

Do not give (others) charity when your kinsfolk are in dire need. Charity is rewarded ten times, giving a loan is rewarded eighteen times, establishing good relations between brothers is rewarded twenty times, and establishing good relations between family members is rewarded twenty-four times.²⁹

لا صدقة وذو رحم محتاج، الصدقة بعشرة، والقرض بثمانية عشر، وصلة الإخوان بعشرين، وصلة الرحم بأربعة وعشرين.

One should give charity every day to forestall the advent of calamity by it. One should not turn away a beggar unless it is in a gracious manner. It is narrated:

Dignify the beggar with a small donation or by a polite decline. Feed three people, and if you wish to feed more, then feed more; you will have thereby given the right of that day.³⁰

أكرم السائل ببذل يسير أو برّد حيل، أطعموا ثلاثة، وإن شئتم أن تردادوا فازدادوا، وإلا فقد أتيتهم حق يومكم.

If a beggar is given something and his heart becomes delighted at it, this is a sign of his sincerity; he will be nervous about losing it and will not underestimate the

worth of what he has. It is narrated:

Do not be embarrassed to give a little, for giving nothing is even less.³¹

لا تستحيوا من إعطاء القليل، فإن الحرمان أقل منه.

❦

The best charity is the effort of [what is given by] the destitute.³²

أفضل الصدقة جهد المقل.

After giving something, one should retain no control over it. It is recommended that he distribute charity given by others. It is reported that, in this way, he will be one of the givers. He should avoid reminding the recipient of his favour or harassing him, for Allah says:

Do not invalidate your charity with reminders of your favour and harassment. (2:264)

A kind word and forgiveness is better than charity followed by harassment. (2:263)

‘Reminders of one’s favour’ means to see one’s self as a good-doer and to be known as someone who has the power to remove the need to repay the amount after it has been given. The real good-doer is the recipient since he makes the donor achieve divine reward and deliverance from chastisement through being a representative of Him, the Exalted. It is the right of Allah which He has transferred to the pauper so that the pauper may obtain the sustenance which He has promised him.

‘Harassment’ refers to taunting, rebuking, evil words, scowling, exploiting, exposing, and belittling. These come from deeming one’s donation great and feeling arrogant in comparison to the recipient. These arise from ignorance of the superiority of Allah’s pleasure over something

lowly and transient, coupled with the obliviousness of the merit of the pauper.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said that the Commander of the Faithful (A) used to say:

Whoever realises that whatever (good) they do, they do for themselves, will not long for people to show them gratitude, nor will they expect people's affection towards them to increase. So do not solicit gratitude from others for something you have done for yourself and by which you have gained salvation from being exposed (on the Day of Judgment). Know that a person who comes to you in need has not honoured himself before you; thus, honour yourself by not refusing him.³³

من علم أن ما صنع إنما صنع لنفسه، لم يستبظ الناس في شكرهم ولم يستزدهم في مودتهم، فلا تلتبس من غيرك شكر ما أتيت إلى نفسك ووقيت به عرضك، واعلم أن الطالب إليك الحاجة لم يكرم وجهه عن وجهك، فاکرم وجهك عن رده.

It has been reported that someone said to Imam al-Baqir (A):

'One of our companions is embarrassed to take *zakat* money, so he is being given *zakat* money but is not being told that it is *zakat*.'

He said, 'Give it to him and do not tell him. Do not debase the believer.'³⁴

وعن الباقر (ع) انه قيل له: الرجل من أصحابنا من يستحي ان يأخذ من الزكاة، فاعطيه من الزكاة ولا اسمي له إنما من الزكاة؟ فقال: أعطه ولا تسم له ولا تذلل المؤمن.

Accepting charity

The recipient should know that Allah has commanded the donor to spend money on him to satisfy his needs, thereby freeing him to worship. He should, therefore, thank Allah and thank the donor, pray for him and praise him, despite recognising that the bestowal is from Allah.

The Prophet (S) said,

Whoever is ungrateful to people is ungrateful to Allah.³⁵

من لم يشكر الناس لم يشكر الله.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

'May Allah curse those who hinder the way of benevolence.'

It was asked, 'How do you hinder the way of benevolence?'

He replied, 'By being the recipient of benevolence but being ungrateful for it, thereby discouraging the benefactor from doing the same for others.'³⁶

قال الصادق (ع): لعن الله قاطعي سبيل المعروف قيل: وما قاطعوا المعروف؟ قال الرجل يصنع إليه المعروف فيكفره، فيمنع صاحبه من أن يصنع ذلك إلى غيره.

If benevolence is shown, the recipient should repay it however he can, even with mere laudation. These beautiful words have been narrated from the Prophet (S):

Whoever is the recipient of benevolence should repay it; if he cannot, then he should praise the giver; if he does not do this, then he has been ungrateful for the blessing.³⁷

من اتى اليه معروف فليكاف به، وإن عجز فليشكر، فإن لم يفعل فقد كفر النعمة.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said that the Commander of the Faithful (A) used to say,

Whoever does a good deed similar to one that was done for him has repaid it. Whoever does it two-fold has truly been grateful; whoever is grateful is gracious.³⁸

من صنع بمثل ما صنع إليه فإنما كافاه، ومن أضعف كان شكوراً، ومن شكر كان كريماً.

The recipient should conceal the faults of the donor. He should neither debase nor defame him. He should neither rebuke nor condemn him for declining if he

declines. He should honour the act of benefaction inside himself and in front of people, while at the same time not thinking of him as anything but a mere intermediary, lest he incline towards polytheistic tendencies.

Regarding the verse 'And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others with Him' (12:106), it is reported that Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

'This is when someone says "had it not been for so-and-so, I would have perished" or "had it not been for so-and-so I would not have attained such-and-such" or "had it not been for so-and-so my family would have perished". Do you not see that this person has made a partner for Allah in His dominion who also provides sustenance and protects?'

It was asked, 'Can he say "had Allah not presented me with so-and-so, I would have perished"?''

He replied, 'Yes. There is no problem if it is said in this way.'³⁹

عن الصادق (ع) في قول الله تعالى: ﴿وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ﴾ قال: هو قول الرجل لولا فلان هلكت ولولا فلان لما أصبت كذا وكذا، ولولا فلان لضاع عيالي، ألا ترى أنه جعل الله شريكاً في ملكه يرزقه ويدفع عنه؟ قيل: فيقول لولا أن الله من عليّ بفلان هلكت، قال: نعم لا بأس بهذا ونحوه.

The recipient should pay attention to any doubts or dubiousness about the origins of the money. He should not take money from someone whose wealth is not earned lawfully, nor should he take more than he requires. He should not publicly ask someone who would be embarrassed to decline.

A scholar should not collect *zakat* at all unless he is forced to prevent stains on his character. If he must take it, he should conceal it, for that is better for preserving his dignity (*muruwwah*), hiding his need, hesitance in accepting money, keeping people's hearts and tongues

from wagging in jealousy, suspicion, and slander, and helping the giver conceal his act. It helps him to preserve himself from humiliation and from associating himself with others who are collecting *zakat* [and hence being looked down upon]. Or [if he does not conceal it] he can make it known with the intention of being sincere, honest, and not confusing the situation; to reduce any sense of haughtiness and to demonstrate his servitude to Allah; to be free from arrogance and to establish the custom of thankfulness, and so on. These [choices] change as intentions, circumstances, and people change; so he should be vigilant over himself, for it is easy to be deceived in this position.

Begging

A believer should not ask people for anything other than a true need, something he is compelled to ask for. He should avoid asking for anything which he can take care of independently, for asking is a form of degradation in this world: it hastens the onset of poverty and leads to a lengthy accounting on the Day of Resurrection.

One day, the Prophet (S) said to his companions,

‘Will you not pay allegiance?’

They replied, ‘We have already paid allegiance to you, O Messenger of Allah.’

He said, ‘Pledge to me that you will not ask people for anything’.

After he said this, even if someone dropped something, he wouldn’t ask anyone to pick it up for him.⁴⁰

قال النبي (ص) يوماً لأصحابه: ألا تباعون؟ فقالوا: قد بايعناك يا رسول الله. قال: تباعون على أن لا تسألوا الناس شيئاً، فكان بعد ذلك يقع المحصورة من يد أحدهم فينزل لها ولا يقول لأحد ناولنيها.

He also said,

It is better for you to take a string and collect a bundle of firewood [to sell] to preserve your dignity rather than to beg.⁴¹

لو أن أحدكم يأخذ حبلًا فيأتي بحزمة حطب على ظهره فيبيعها فيكفّ بها وجهه خير له من أن يسأل.



Whenever someone asks us something, we give it to him; but Allah enriches the one who is independent.⁴²

من سألنا أعطينا، ونحن استغنى أغناه الله.

Imam al-Sajjad (A) said,

Allah has guaranteed that if someone begs when not in need, He will drive that person to a situation one day when he will need to beg out of need.⁴³

ضمنت على ربي أن لا يسأل أحد أحدًا من غير حاجة إلا اضطرته حاجة المسألة يوماً، إلى أن يسأل من حاجة.

On the day of 'Arafah, he saw people begging and said,

These are the worst of Allah's creation. The people are turning to Allah, but they are turning to the people.⁴⁴

نظر (ع) يوم عرفة إلى رجال يسألون الناس فقال: هؤلاء شرار من خلق الله، الناس مقبلون على الله وهم مقبلون على الناس.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

I swear by Allah – and He is the absolute truth – that whenever someone opens the door of begging, Allah opens the door of poverty for him.⁴⁵

أقسم بالله وهو حق ما فتح رجل على نفسه باب مسألة إلا فتح الله عليه باب فقر.



Seeking one's needs from the people damages one's dignity and leads to shame. The dignity of the believer is hopelessness of (receiving) what lies in people's hands, and greed is true poverty.⁴⁶

طلب الخوائج إلى الناس استلاب للعزّ ومذهبة للحياء، والياس مما في أيدي الناس عز المؤمن، والطمع هو الفقر الحاضر.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Our followers are those who do not beg people for anything, even if they are dying of hunger.⁴⁷

شيعتنا من لا يسأل الناس شيئاً ولو مات جوعاً.



If the beggar knew the magnitude of the burden upon him, he would never have asked anyone for anything. And if the person being asked knew what was upon him for refusing, he would never have refused anyone anything.⁴⁸

ولو يعلم السائل ما عليه من الوزر ما سأل أحد أحداً، ولو يعلم المسؤول ما عليه إذ منع أحد أحداً.



A person who begs without being in dire need is like someone who drinks wine.⁴⁹

من سأل من غير الحاجة فكأنما يأكل الخمر.

Some have said that a man came to beg from the Prophet (S) and told him,

'I implore you by the face of Allah.'

So the Prophet (S) ordered that he be lashed five times and said, 'Beg for your own ignoble face, not for the noble face of Allah.'⁵⁰

سأل رجل النبي (ص) فقال: أسألك بوجه الله، فأمر النبي (ص) بضرب خمسة أسواط، ثم قال: سل بوجهك اللئيم ولا تسأل بوجه الله الكريم.

Zakat of the body

Know that the physical body has a *zakat* tax just like wealth has a *zakat* tax. This is done by removing something from it to increase goodness and blessings. This can be done under compulsion – for instance, by being afflicted with a disease – or voluntarily, by using the body for obedience and preventing it from being used for disobedience.

Hence, Imam al-Sadiq (A) said:

The Prophet (S) once said to his companions, 'Cursed is all wealth that has not been purified (*yuzakka*; i.e. through paying the *zakat*);⁵¹ cursed is every body that has not been purified (*yuzakka*), even if just once every forty days.'

It was said to him, 'O Messenger of Allah, we know what the *zakat* tax on wealth is. But what is the *zakat* tax on the body?'

He said, 'Being afflicted with a disease.'

The looks on the faces of those who heard this changed. When he saw their colour change, he said, 'Do you know what I meant by what I said?'

They said, 'No, O Messenger of Allah.'

He said, 'That a person is either scarred by abrasion, distressed by a misfortune, ill due to an ailment, is pricked by a thorn...' – and the like, such that even eye infections are mentioned in this narration.⁵²

قال النبي (ص) يوماً لأصحابه: ملعون كل مال لا يزكي، ملعون كل جسد لا يزكي، ولو في كل أربعين يوماً مرة. قيل له: يا رسول الله، أما زكاة المال فقد عرفناها فما زكاة الاجساد؟ قال لهم: أن تصاب بأفة، قال: فتغيرت وجوه الذين سمعوا ذلك منه، قال فلما رأهم قد تغيرت ألوانهم قال: هل تدرون ما عنيت بقولي؟ قالوا: لا يا رسول الله، قال: إن الرجل يخدش الخدشة وينكس النكبة ويعثر العثرة ويمرض المرضة ويشاك الشوكة وما أشبه هذا حتى ذكر في حديثه اختلاج العين.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

Upon every part of you, Allah has ordained an obligatory *zakat* – upon every growth of your hair and at every moment.

The *zakat* of the eye is to look to take lessons and to lower the gaze from the desires and their like.

The *zakat* of the ears is listening to knowledge; wisdom; the Qur'an; beneficial religious discussions, such as exhortations and advice; and whatever else your salvation lies in; as well as turning the ears away from whatever opposes your salvation, such as lying, backbiting, and their like.

The *zakat* of the tongue is sincere counsel for believers, awakening the negligent, abundant glorification and remembrance of Allah, and so on.

The *zakat* of the hand is open-handedness with whatever Allah has bestowed upon you, engaging the hand in writing down knowledge and useful things that Muslims will benefit from in their obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and restraining it from acts of evil.

The *zakat* of the feet is exerting them to fulfil the rights of Allah, visiting righteous people and gatherings where Allah is remembered, reconciling people, maintaining family ties, going towards jihad, and going towards whatever else the integrity of your heart and security of your religion can be found in.⁵³

على كل جزء من أجزائك زكاة واجبة لله تعالى. بل على كل منبت شعرك بل على كل لحظة. فزكاة العين النظر بالعبر والغض عن الشهوات وما يضاهيها. وزكاة الاذن استماع العلم والحكمة والقرآن وفوائد الدين من الموعظة والنصيحة، وما فيه نجاتك والاعراض عما هو ضده من الكذب والغيبة واشباههما. وزكاة اللسان النصح للمسلمين وإيقاظ الغافلين وكثرة التسييح والذكر وغيره، وزكاة اليد البذل والسخاء بما أنعم الله به عليك، وتحريكها بكتابة العلم ومنافع ينتفع بها المسلمون في طاعة الله تعالى والقبض عن الشرور. وزكاة الرجل السعي في حقوق الله من زيارة الصالحين ومجالس الذكر واصلاح الناس وصلة الرحم والجهاد، وما فيه صلاح قلبك وسلامة دينك.

This is what hearts can understand, and souls can apply. This is something that only those purified ones who are near to Allah can understand; and they grasp this

more than people can imagine. It is their word and their thought.

The Prophet (S) said,

There is a *zakat* for everything, and the *zakat* for the body is fasting.⁵⁴

لكل شيء زكاة وزكاة الابدان الصيام.

Notes

- ¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 3, p. 505.
- ² Ibid., p. 506.
- ³ Ibid., p. 497.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 503.
- ⁵ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 8, p. 196.
- ⁶ al-Saduq, *Man La Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, vol. 2, p. 7.
- ⁷ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 3, p. 509.
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 499.
- ⁹ Ibid., vol. 4, p. 32.
- ¹⁰ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 71, p. 396.
- ¹¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 4, p. 2.
- ¹² Ibid., p. 55.
- ¹³ Ibid., p. 46.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 75, p. 267.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., vol. 64, p. 335.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., vol. 39, p. 67.
- ¹⁸ The eighteenth day of the month of Dhul al-Hijjah.
- ¹⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 333.
- ²⁰ Ibid., vol. 4, p. 7.
- ²¹ Ibid., vol. 3, p. 501.
- ²² Ibid., *al-Kafi*, vol. 3, p. 502.
- ²³ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 93, p. 178.
- ²⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 4, p. 30.
- ²⁵ With reference to a narration reported from Imam al-Baqir (A), quoted in al-Hilli, *Nihayat al-Ihkam fi Ma'rifat al-Ahkam* (Qum: Mu'assasat Al al-Bayt), vol. 2, p. 431.
- ²⁶ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 93, p. 134.
- ²⁷ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 4, p. 47.

²⁸ The narration is related from Imam Hasan al-'Askari (A), from his forefathers, from the Holy Prophet (S). al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 9, p. 230.

²⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 4, p. 10.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

³¹ The narration is from Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A). al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 93, p. 172.

³² al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 9, p. 432.

³³ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 72, p. 42.

³⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 3, p. 564.

³⁵ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummal*, vol. 3, p. 266.

³⁶ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 72, p. 43.

³⁷ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummal*, vol. 6, p. 464.

³⁸ Muhammad ibn Husayn al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 16, p. 306.

³⁹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 55, p. 317.

⁴⁰ Ibid., vol. 93, p. 158.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 138.

⁴³ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 93, p. 158.

⁴⁴ Ibid., vol. 96, p. 261.

⁴⁵ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 9, p. 438.

⁴⁶ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 149.

⁴⁷ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 93, p. 158.

⁴⁸ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 9, p. 443.

⁴⁹ A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary texts of *hadith*.

⁵⁰ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 7, p. 263.

⁵¹ In the Arabic language, the word *zakat*, referring to the taxation of wealth in question, is a noun derived from the same root as the verb meaning 'to be pure'.

⁵² al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 258.

⁵³ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 51.

⁵⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 4, p. 62.

❖ Fasting ❖

Introduction

Allah says: 'Fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may be God-conscious' (2:183).

The Prophet (S) said,

Fasting is a shield from the Hellfire.¹ الصوم جنة من النار.



The fasting person is in a state of worship even if he is sleeping in his bed, as long as he is not backbiting a fellow Muslim.²

الصائم في العبادة وإن كان نائماً على فراشه ما لم يغترب مسلماً.



Allah, the Exalted, says: Fasting is (performed) for Me and I am the reward for it. The fasting individual has two moments of delight: one when breaking the fast; and the other when meeting his Lord, the Exalted. I swear by He in whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, the breath of a fasting person smells better to Allah than the fragrance of musk.³

الصوم لي وأنا اجزي به، وللصائم فرحتان حين يفطر وحين يلقي ربه تعالى، والذي نفس محمد بيده خلوف فم الصائم عند الله أطيب من ريح المسك.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Islam has been founded upon five things: prayer, *zakat*, hajj, fasting,

and *wilayah* (divinely appointed authority).⁴

بنى الاسلام على خمسة أشياء: على الصلاة والزكاة والحج والصوم والولاية.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Whenever someone fasts a day for the sake of Allah in extreme heat and is overcome by thirst, Allah assigns a thousand angels to wipe his face and gladden him until he breaks his fast. Allah, the Exalted, says: 'How pleasant your fragrance and breath have become! O My angels, bear witness that I have forgiven him.'⁵

من صام لله تعالى يوماً في شدة الحر فأصابه ظمأ، وكل الله ألف ملك يمسحون وجهه ويمشرونه، حتى إذا أفطر قال الله تعالى: ما أطيب ريحك وروحك، يا ملائكتي اشهدوا إنني قد غفرت له.



The sleep of a fasting individual is worship, his silence is glorification of Allah, his deeds are accepted, and his supplication is answered.⁶

نوم الصائم عبادة وصمته تسبيح وعمله مقبول ودعاؤه مستجاب.

Imam al-Kazim (A) said,

Take a nap in the daytime, for Allah, the Sacred and Exalted, feeds the fasting person and quenches his thirst in his sleep.⁷

قولوا فإن الله تبارك وتعالى يطعم الصائم ويسقيه في منامه.

It has been said that were there no benefit to fasting except ascension from the low point of the animalistic soul to the spiritual summit like the angels, this would have been enough of a virtue and merit for fasting.

Fasting is a shield from the Hellfire since it repels the heat of carnal desire and anger – the two things by which the fire of Hell burns within people in the world and exposes them in the Hereafter – just as a shield protects a person from the heat of iron.

The Prophet said 'so long as he is not backbiting a

fellow Muslim'⁸ because backbiting is eating the flesh of the dead,⁹ which is one type of eating by which the body is nourished.

And the fast is an honour for Allah – even though all types of worship are for Him – just like the holy sanctuary in Mecca is honoured with respect to Him, even though the entire earth is His. The fast has two meanings.

First, it is abstention and abandoning things. This in itself contains the mystery, in that there is no action to be witnessed. All acts of obedience to Allah can be witnessed by the creation except for fasting, which no one knows about except Allah, for it is a deed done by the inner self with patience solely for Allah. Hence the reward for it is exclusively from Him, and no one else shares in granting it.

Second, it subdues the enemy of Allah, for Satan uses the carnal desires as a medium, and the carnal desires are strengthened by eating and drinking.

It is for this reason that the Prophet (S) said,

Satan flows through the son of Adam like blood flows (in him). So restrict his ability to flow through hunger.¹⁰

إن الشيطان ليجري من ابن آدم مجرى الدم، فضيّقوا مجاريه بالجوع.

The carnal desires are the breeding ground and pasture land for the devils. As long as they have fertilizer, they will continue to reproduce; and as long as they reproduce, the majesty of Allah will never be disclosed to the slave, who will remain veiled from His audience.

The Messenger of Allah (S) said,

Were it not for the devils hovering around the hearts of the children of Adam, they would have seen the heavenly kingdom.¹¹

FASTING

لولا الشياطين يحومون على قلوب بني آدم لنظروا إلى ملكوت السماء.

People of spiritual distinction experience delight at the time of breaking the fast because they sense that, by the grace of Allah, they have completed the fast and obtained its reward. Ordinary people experience delight because fasting has ended and they can have what they desire.

People of spiritual distinction experience delight when they encounter the Lord because they have acquired illumination of the heart as a result, breaking the two tyrannical faculties of carnal desire and anger through hunger. This, in turn, incites them to worship Allah, witnessing Him as if they see Him – this is the true meaning of ‘encounter’.

The smell of the breath becomes, to Allah, more fragrant than musk because this is the fragrance of the spirit which, before Allah, is the human being – just as the body is the person in the physical realm.

This is what He alludes to by saying: ‘What is with you will be depleted, whereas what is with Allah shall remain’ (16:96).

What is the fragrance of the spirit compared to the fragrance of musk? The former is spiritual, rational, and incorporeal; while the second is bodily, tangible, and superficial.

Levels of fasting

Know that the fast has three levels: the fast of the ordinary people; the fast of the elite; and the fast of the elite of the elite.

The fast of the ordinary people is the abstinence of the stomach and the private parts from fulfilling the carnal

desires.

The fast of the elite is restraining the hearing, sight, tongue, hands, feet, and all other limbs from misdeeds.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

When you fast, your hearing should also fast, as well as your sight, your hair, your skin...¹²

إذا صمت فليصم سمعك وبصرك وشعرك وجلدك...

– and he mentioned numerous other things.

He also said,

Let not the day that you fast be like that day that you do not fast.¹³

لا يكون يوم صومك كيوم فطرك.

According to another narration, he continued,

...and abandon disputes and harassing servants. Let the sobriety of fasting be upon you. For the Messenger of Allah heard a woman insulting her bondmaid while she was fasting, so he called for food to be brought to her and said, 'Eat'. She replied, 'I am fasting.' He said to her, 'How can you be fasting while you have insulted your bondmaid? Fasting is not only about refraining from food and drink.'¹⁴

...ودع المراء وأذى الخادم، وليكن عليك وقار الصيام، فإن رسول الله (ص) سمع امرأة تسب جاريتها وهي صائمة، فدعا بطعام فقال لها: كلي فقالت: إني صائمة فقال: كيف تكونين صائمة وقد سببت جاريتك، إن الصوم ليس من الطعام والشراب فقط.

It is narrated that the Prophet (S) said,

Fasting is a shield from the Fire. So when anyone of you is fasting, then let him not be obscene or crude. If a person fights with or insults him, he should say, 'I am fasting, I am fasting.'¹⁵

إنما الصوم جنة من النار، فإذا كان أحدكم صائماً فلا يرفث ولا يجهل، وإن امرؤ قاتله وشاتمته، فليقل إني صائم إني صائم.

And the Prophet said,

If someone backbites a Muslim, his fast is void and his ablution is invalidated. If he dies like that, then he dies like one who permitted what Allah had prohibited.¹⁶

من اغتاب مسلماً بطل صومه ونقض وضوءه وإن مات وهو كذلك، مات وهو مستحل لما حرم الله.



How many fasting people gain nothing from their fast except hunger and thirst!¹⁷

كم من صائم ليس له من صومه إلا الجوع والعطش.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

‘Lying breaks the fast.’

Someone asked, ‘But which one of us could avoid that completely?’

He replied, ‘It is not what you think: this is referring to lying about Allah, His Messenger (S), or the Imams (A).’¹⁸

وقال الصادق (ع): إن الكذبة لتفطر الصائم، قيل: وإينا لا يكون ذلك منه؟ قال: ليس حيث تذهب، إنما الكذب على الله وعلى رسوله (ص) وعلى الائمة (ع).

When we say that lying, backbiting, and so on invalidate the fast, we mean that the fast will not be accepted by Allah, and it will not receive a divine reward. The jurists do not hold that lying, backbiting, and so on actually break the fast, so we do not mean that the fast is actually invalidated or was not performed; the duty to fast will have been performed (as we discussed in the chapter on prayer). For this reason, we have stipulated avoiding these sins as part of the fasting of the elite, not the fasting of ordinary people.

The elite of the elite fast with their hearts from lowly concerns and worldly thoughts, and they abstain from everything other than Allah. At this level, they break their

fast by thinking about something other than Allah, the final day, or this world – unless they are thinking about this world for religious reasons, for that is an otherworldly, not worldly concern.

The masters of the heart have said,

A misdeed is noted in the record of anyone whose foremost concern during the day is planning how he will break his fast. This is because of his lack of confidence in Allah's grace and lack of certainty in His promised sustenance.

The prophets, the truthful ones, and those near to Allah were at this level.

The opposite of this person is the one who longs for the time of breaking the fast to come so he can fill himself. Thus it is narrated,

No container is more hateful to Allah than a stomach full of the permissible (*halal*).¹⁹

ما من وعاء أبغض إلى الله من بطن ملى من حلال.

How can the enemy of Allah be subdued or the carnal desires be broken through fasting if, at the end of the fast, the fasting individual indulges and loses the benefits of that day? He might have prepared many varieties of food to keep up with customs and traditions, as if he had saved up all his food for the month of Ramadan. What is eaten in that month is never eaten in other months.

The entire point of fasting is for the stomach to be hollowed, the whimsical desires broken, and the soul fortified with God-consciousness. If, during the day, the stomach is kept away from food but, in the evening – when the desires are aroused and caprice awakened – it is filled up with enjoyable foods, its capacity for pleasure will be strengthened, and the other carnal desires excited

– unless the person is accustomed to abandoning them.

So the spirit and secret of fasting is to weaken the faculties that Satan uses to lead a person towards evil. This can only be done through moderation – by eating the same meal that would be eaten on any other night when not fasting. However, a person who combines everything that he would have eaten from morning to night into the fast-breaking meal will attain no benefit from fasting, and it will not be easy for him to stay awake in prayer.

It is said that, on the Night of Decree (*laylat al-qadr*),²⁰ some of the celestial realm is revealed. However, a person who, like a horse, has a feedbag full of food hung between his heart and chest will be veiled from that. Simply emptying the stomach thereafter will not be enough to lift the veil; rather, the person must empty his concerns of anything other than Allah, the Exalted. This is the entire purpose behind this matter, and it begins with eating less.

Benefits of fasting

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says,

The Messenger of Allah (S) said, 'Fasting is a shield.'

This means that it is a screen against the calamities of the world and a veil against the chastisement of the Hereafter. So when you fast, intend to restrain the soul from the carnal desires by your fast, and prevent your desires from following the footsteps of Satan. Demote yourself to the position of the sick, not desiring food or drink, and at every moment expect the cure from the ailment of sins. Purify your inward self from every unclean thing, from every aspect of negligence and gloominess that prevents you from reaching true sincerity for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

The Messenger of Allah (S) said, Allah says, 'Fasting is for Me and I am its reward.'²¹

قال رسول الله (ص): الصوم جنة، أي ستر من آفات الدنيا وحجاب من عذاب الآخرة، فإذا صمت، فانو بصومك كف النفس عن الشهوات وقطع الهمة عن خطوات الشيطان، فانزل نفسك منزلة المرضى لا يشتهي طعاما وشرابا، متوقعا في كل لحظة شفاك من مرض الذنوب، وطهر باطنك من كل كدر وغفلة وظلمة، يقطعك عن معنى الاخلاص لوجه الله تعالى، قال رسول الله (ص): قال تعالى: الصوم لي وأنا اجزي به.

Fasting kills the caprice of the soul and the natural desires. Through it, the heart becomes serene, and the limbs purified. It inspires inner and outer devotion, thankfulness for blessings, kindness to the poor and an increase in imploring, humility, and crying. It impels a person to cling to the rope of seeking protection in Allah, and it breaks off zealous concerns. It lightens accountability in the Hereafter and multiplies good deeds. Within it lie innumerable benefits. What we have mentioned should suffice to motivate whoever comprehends it and applies it well.

Notes

- ¹ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 19.
- ² al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 72, p. 249.
- ³ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 10, p. 400.
- ⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 18.
- ⁵ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 56, p. 190.
- ⁶ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 4, p. 64.
- ⁷ Ibid., p. 65.
- ⁸ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 72, p. 249.
- ⁹ With reference to: 'And do not backbite one another. Would any one of you like to eat the dead flesh of his brother? Indeed you would detest it' (Qur'an, 49:12)
- ¹⁰ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 60, p. 332.
- ¹¹ Ibid., vol. 56, p. 163.
- ¹² al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 4, p. 87.
- ¹³ Ibid.

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¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 19.

¹⁶ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 73, p. 363.

¹⁷ Ibid., vol. 93, p. 294.

¹⁸ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 340.

¹⁹ Ibid., vol. 6, p. 270.

²⁰ Said to fall upon one of the odd-dated nights in the final third of the month of Ramadan.

²¹ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 135.

❖ Hajj ❖

Introduction

About the pilgrimage to Mecca and the holy sites, Allah the Exalted says:

Incumbent upon man, owed to Allah, is hajj to the (sacred) house for whoever is able to make the journey. And whoever disbelieves, Allah is needless of the creatures of the world. (3:97)

The Prophet (S) said,

If someone dies without performing the hajj, he dies as a Jew or a Christian – whichever he wishes.¹

من مات ولم يحج، فليمت إن شاء يهودياً وإن شاء نصرانياً.

And Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

If someone dies without performing the hajj – and was not hindered by poverty, a sickness he could not tolerate during the hajj, or a ruler – then let him die as a Jew or a Christian.²

من مات ولم يحج حجة الإسلام، لم يمنعه من ذلك حاجة يحجف به أو مرض لا يطيق فيه الحج أو سلطان يمنعه، فليمت يهودياً أو نصرانياً.

Countless narrations discuss the hajj and the lesser pilgrimage (*'umrah*) and have been mentioned in the appropriate places among the details of how to perform the hajj.

As for the mystical aspect of the hajj, know that Allah

can only be reached by purifying the self from the carnal desires, abstaining from pleasures, limiting one's self to the necessities, and devoting one's self completely to Allah in every action and moment of rest. This was why, in the prior faiths, the monks withdrew themselves from the people, choosing to live on the mountain peaks instead, preferring the isolation of the wilderness over living with other people as they pursued intimacy with Allah. They gave up the pleasures of civilisation and obligated arduous struggles upon themselves in their desire for the Hereafter. Allah commends them in His book:

They invented monasticism for themselves. We did not prescribe anything other than seeking the pleasure of Allah. (57:27)

That is because among them were clergymen and ascetic monks, and because they were not arrogant. (5:82)

But when they became extinct and people turned to following their carnal desires, abandoned devotion to Allah and slackened in their worship, Allah the Exalted sent Muhammad (S) to revive the path of the Hereafter and to restore the practices of the earlier messengers. Some people from other faiths asked him about monasticism and living a wandering, ascetic life in his religion. He replied (S),

Allah has replaced it with jihad and saying *takbir* when mounting every hill.³

ابدلنا (الرهبانية) الجهاد والتكبير على كل شرف.

It is said that this refers to the hajj. When he was asked about wandering ascetics, he replied,

They are the ones who fast.⁴ وسئل عن السائحين فقال: هم الصائمون.

Thus, Allah blessed this nation by making the hajj its form of monasticism, and ennobled the ancient house (the Ka'bah) – in addition to its intrinsic honour – by appointing it as the destination of His worshippers. He also sanctified the areas around the sacred House to glorify Him by His command. He made the plains of 'Arafat like the courtyard to His sanctuary. He emphasized the sacredness of the region by prohibiting hunting and cutting down trees. He made it like the seats of kings, which visitors come to via 'deep and distant mountain highways' (22:27) and remote paths, dishevelled and dusty, humbled before the Lord of the sacred House, submitting to Him, yielding to His majesty, and surrendering to His might, while acknowledging that He is too transcendent to be encompassed in any house or confined to any land. This makes their bondage and servitude towards Him more intense, and their submission and obedience to Him more complete.

For this reason, He tasked them with rites that the mind is not at ease with and whose significance the intellect cannot discover, such as throwing pebbles at the pillars (*ramy*), and repeating the journey between Safa and Marwah. With acts such as these, the perfection of bondage and servitude to Allah becomes apparent.

For *zakat* is a benevolent gift; its purpose is known and acceptable to the intellect. Fasting is for breaking the carnal desires that are the enemies of Allah and for devoting the self to worship by abstaining from preoccupations. Bowing and prostrating in the prayer are for expressing humility to Allah by enacting demonstrations of humility while the souls recognize the grandeur of Allah.

But as for the repeated journey between Safa and Marwah (*sa'i*),⁵ or throwing the pebbles, the soul plays no part; one's inner nature does not incline towards it; and the intellect does not comprehend its significance. The only incentive to perform these rites is that they have been commanded, and a command to do what is religiously necessary (*wajib*) must be followed. The intellect disengages from it, and the inner self and inner nature feel out of place, for a person's natural disposition inclines towards whatever the intellect comprehends to the extent of the comprehension. While this inclination supports the command and acts as an incentive to fulfil it, it hardly manifests true unquestioning servitude or unreserved compliance.

That is why the Prophet (S) said specifically at the pilgrimage, 'I am at Your service (*labbayk*) at the pilgrimage! Truly devoted as a slave!' – and he did not say that during prayer or any other time. If the wisdom of Allah necessitates that the salvation of mankind be tied to deeds which oppose their natural urges, and that they be reined in by the divine law, so they perform their actions like slaves following their masters, not on a rational basis – as we are commanded to do something but do not know the reason for it – the performance of such a thing would have the most effective influence in purifying the soul and driving it away from what is natural and based on intrinsic traits towards what is based on true servitude [to Allah].

When you realise this, you understand that the souls are astonished at these astounding actions because they are oblivious of the secrets behind these acts of worship. From what we have mentioned, it is clear that a person

who heads for the sacred House is really heading towards Allah fervently so that he can succeed in meeting with Allah at the time He has appointed. Yearning to meet Allah will inevitably lead to meeting Him, and so the pilgrim should make his intention purely for the sake of Allah and keep aloof from the desire to show off or anything else.

Travelling for the hajj

Before setting off from his hometown, the prospective pilgrim should redress any grievances, sincerely repent to Allah, and cut off the ties of his heart from anything other than Allah so that he can face Allah with his heart. He should assume that he will not return and write his will for his family and children. He should prepare for the final journey, for this is imminently awaiting him. He should adopt the appropriate etiquette of journeying, as has been mentioned previously, especially preparing ample provisions, perfuming himself, speaking pleasantly and kindly, and conducting himself with as much humility as possible.

Thus it is narrated,

Kind behaviour during hajj includes pleasant speech and feeding others.⁶

برّ الحج، طيب الكلام وإطعام الطعام.

The only reward for an accepted pilgrimage is Paradise. The pilgrim should not be worried about money, for whatever wealth is spent on the pilgrimage will be repaid, since a single dirham spent there equals seven hundred dirhams spent in the way of Allah. The pilgrim's heart should be serene and dedicated to remembering

Allah and honouring His sanctified places. He should be mindful of otherworldly matters, as is appropriate, while he is unkempt, dusty, and unadorned – especially, if possible, as he walks between the different stations of the hajj.

For it is narrated that Allah is not worshipped in any way better than walking – not just to save money when the money is available, for in this case [when a person is trying to reduce the cost of hajj] riding a mount is preferred, especially if the pilgrim becomes so weak by walking that he cannot perform the rites of hajj. Hence it is narrated,

I prefer that you ride on mounts (instead of walking) since a person who rides will save their strength for prayer and worship.⁷

فإن الركوب حينئذ أفضل، سيما لمن ضعف بالمشي، وساء خلقه وقصر في العمل.

Imam al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali (A) used to carry a saddle with him when he travelled, and if a riding animal came along, he would thank Allah in his heart for sending him the animal to ease the difficulty of travelling.

As he enters the desert, heading for the specific stages of hajj, and proceeds along his journey, he should call to mind the passage leading from the life of this world past death to the station of the Day of Resurrection, and the terrors and accountability that await him there.

While he is in fear of bandits, he should keep in mind his fear when Munkar and Nakir question him. While he is in fear of desert beasts, he should keep in mind the scorpions, worms, vipers, and insects in the grave. While secluded from his family and relatives, he should keep in mind the solitude, anguish, and loneliness of the grave. When faced with this fear, he will seek provision to stave

off fear of the grave in everything he says and does.

When he dons the two pieces of the pilgrim's garments (*ihram*), he should imagine himself wrapped in his burial shroud and about to meet Allah. Just as, when he goes to the sacred house of Allah, he wears clothes which are completely different from his daily wear, when he goes to meet Allah after death, he will wear clothes which are completely different from his worldly wear. The unstitched pilgrim's garments resemble the unstitched funeral shroud.

Know that wearing the pilgrim's garments and calling 'Here I am!' (*labbayk*) at the various stations are a response to the call of Allah.⁸ The pilgrim should hope for its acceptance, yet fear that it would be said to him 'There is no *labbayk* and no *sa'adayk* (at Your service willingly) for you!' He should alternate between hope and fear, claiming no power or might for himself, and rely instead on the grace and kindness of Allah. Indeed, the moment of proclaiming 'Here I am!' is the first step, a perilous point.

It is related that when Imam al-Sajjad (A) wore the *ihram* and sat upon his mount, he paled, collapsed, shuddered, and was unable to utter 'Here I am!' When asked why he did not say it, he replied,

I feared my Lord would tell me, 'There is no *labbayk* and no *sa'adayk* for you!'⁹

أخشى أن يقول لي ربي لا لييك ولا سعديك.

Then, when he finally uttered it, he fell unconscious and slipped from his mount. He remained in this condition until he completed the pilgrimage.

The sacred House

When entering Mecca, the pilgrim should remember that he has arrived at the secure sanctuary. He should hope that, by entering it, he will be secure from the punishment of Allah. At the same time, he should fear that he will not be worthy of nearness to Allah and might be disappointed and loathsome as he enters the holy sanctuary. However, his hope should always prevail, for the divine generosity encompasses all, the sacred house is honoured, the rights of its visitors are observed, and those who seek protection in it are not abandoned.

When his eyes fall upon the sacred house, his heart should remember the greatness of the House, and he should feel as if he is being watched by the Lord of the House in all His grandeur. He should hope that Allah would allow him to meet Him, just as He allowed him to visit His House; and he should thank Allah for bringing him to this point, for bringing him near, and for joining him in the fold of those who flock towards Him.

Since circling the House (*tawaf*) is a form of prayer, the pilgrim should fill his heart with praise, fear, hope, and love (and all else that was mentioned in the section on prayer). When circling the House, he should realise that he is imitating the angels that are intimate with Allah, surrounding and circling the divine throne. He should not think that the purpose of *tawaf* is for his body to go around the House. Rather, it is so that his heart will remember the Lord of the House, and so that he will begin and end his remembrance with Him just as the *tawaf* begins and ends at the sacred House.

He should also know that the *tawaf* is honoured, for, during *tawaf*, the heart circles the divine presence. He

should know that the House is an outward embodiment – in the physical realm – of that presence which the eye cannot see and which is in the celestial realm. Similarly, the body is an outward embodiment – in the visible realm – of the heart, which the eye cannot see and which is in the unseen realm. The physical, witnessed realm is a pathway to the unseen, celestial realm – for whomever the door is opened to.

This indicates that *al-Bayt al-Ma'mur* is the heavenly counterpart to the Ka'bah.¹⁰ The angels circle it just as humans circle the sacred House. Since most people would fall short of being able to perform the celestial *tawaf*, they have been commanded to imitate the angels as much as possible, and have been promised that 'whoever imitates a people becomes like them'.¹¹

When touching the Black Stone, the pilgrim should know that it is at the position of the 'right hand'. As the Messenger of Allah (S) said,

Proceed to the corner of the Ka'bah, for it is the right hand of Allah over His creation. He shakes the hands of His slaves and His intimate servants (*dakhil*) with it, and acknowledges the arrival of those who touch it.¹²

استلموا الركن فإنه يمين الله في خلقه، يصافح بها خلقه مصافحة العبد أو الدخيل، ويشهد لمن استلمه بالموافاة.

By 'corner', he meant the Black Stone, because it is placed in the corner. He likened it to Allah's right hand because it is the medium through which Allah's slaves seek to attain nearness to Him, His endearment, and His approval – just like the right hand in a handshake. A *dakhil* (lit. 'intimate') is one who seeks refuge.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

When He took covenants from His slaves, Allah gave a command to the Black Stone, and it swallowed up the covenants (to preserve them). Thus, it is said, 'You have fulfilled My trust and maintained My covenant by bearing witness to Me through coming here'.¹³

إن الله تبارك وتعالى لما أخذ موثيق العباد أمر الحجر فالتقمها، فلذلك يقال: أمانتي أدبتها وميثاقي تعاهدته لتشهد لي بالموافاة.



The Yemeni corner¹⁴ is one of doors to Paradise, which Allah has not locked since He opened it.¹⁵

الركن اليمني باب من أبواب الجنة لم يغلقه الله منذ فتحه.



The Yemeni corner is the door through which we enter Paradise. Within it is a river of Paradise into which the deeds of the slaves are cast.¹⁶

الركن اليمني بابنا الذي ندخل منه الجنة، وفيه نهر من الجنة يلقى فيه أعمال العباد.

He compared it to a door of Paradise because touching it is a means of entering Paradise; and he compared it to a river because it washes away sins.

When touching the stone, the pilgrim should seek nearness to Allah with love and eagerness for the House and the Lord of the House. He should also seek blessings by touching it and hopeful of being safe from the people in every part of the House that he visits. When clinging to the drapes covering the sacred House, he should intend to plead for forgiveness and beg for safety, just as a sinner clings to the robes of the one he has wronged, imploring His pardon, confessing that he has no recourse but to Him, no refuge except His generosity and kindness, and adamant that he will not let go unless promised His pardon and sanctuary with Him.

The rites of hajj

The *sa'i*¹⁷ between mounts Safa and Marwah in the courtyard of the sacred House represents the hesitation of the slave in the courtyard of the abode of the King as he comes and goes, time after time, demonstrating his sincerity and servitude, hoping to be looked upon with a merciful eye – like a person who visits a king, stands before him, and is unsure what the king has decided in his regard, whether to accept or reject him.

Halting in 'Arafat – with its loud, bustling crowds; varying languages; and different groups of people going and coming, following their leaders to the various stations of hajj – should bring to mind the plains of the Day of Resurrection and the gathering of peoples there with the prophets and Imams. It should bring to mind how every people will follow in the footsteps of their prophet, longing for their prophet's intercession, bewildered as they await Allah's acceptance or rejection on that plateau.

With this in mind, the pilgrim's heart should cling to humble prayer and supplication, praying that Allah group him with those who have won Allah's mercy, and that his hope would be realized by Allah's response. So that station is noble, and divine mercy emanates from the divine presence to the rest of creation by means of cherished hearts which are the pillars of the earth. This station will never be empty of those righteous people with pure hearts. If they are united in their absolute devotion – with imploring hearts, hands raised to Allah, necks outstretched, their eyes gazing upwards to the heavens – united with a single aspiration of seeking divine mercy, then it is extremely unlikely that their hopes will be dashed or their efforts rendered futile. Hence, it has been

said, 'How great a sin it is for someone to be present in 'Arafat and still think that Allah has not forgiven him.'

When at the Mash'ar,¹⁸ the pilgrim should envision His master approaching him after he had fled Him and been banished from His door, and permitting him to enter His sanctuary again. For the Mash'ar is considered to be within the precincts of the holy sanctuary, while 'Arafat is outside of it. Thus, he is beholding the doorway to mercy, with the breezes of compassion rustling him, having been granted acceptance through being permitted to enter the sanctuary of the king.

When he throws the pebbles, he should intend to submit to the divine command by manifesting his serfdom and servitude; he should intend to comply with the command without any other involvement from his intellect or soul. Then he should intend to imitate Abraham (A) when Iblis [the devil] presented himself to him at this juncture to bring doubt or trial to him during his hajj. Thus, Allah ordered him to pelt Iblis with stones to banish him and sever his hopes. In the physical world, the pilgrim throws pebbles at the pillars; whereas, in reality, he throws them in the face of Satan and breaks his back since, despite Satan's disdain, nothing took place but obedience to and glorification of Allah, even though the intellect was not involved.

When offering the sacrifice, the pilgrim should know that nearness to Allah is achieved by obeying His command. He should complete the sacrifice, with all of its conditions, and hope that, in every step, he is freed from one part of the Fire, as has been promised in the narrations.

The Lantern of the Path on hajj

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

When you intend to go on hajj, for the sake of Allah, empty your heart of any preoccupation or veil. Delegate all your affairs to your Creator, and trust entirely in Him in all your acts or moments of rest. Resign yourself to His command, wisdom, and decree; bid farewell to the world, its comforts, and the creation; fulfil the obligations that you have to other people. Do not rely on your provisions, your mount, your companions, your strength, your youth, or anything that may act against you and become an enemy or burden to you. For when someone claims that he wants the pleasure of Allah but relies on something other than Him, He makes it an enemy and burden for him until he realises that he has no power and no escape – and nor does anyone else – except in the protection of Allah and the success that He grants. So prepare yourself like someone who does not expect to return.

Pick the best companions (for the journey) and adhere to the times of the obligatory prayers that Allah has stipulated, the recommended acts of His prophet, and whatever else you ought to comply with, such as good etiquette, tolerance, patience, gratitude, empathy, generosity, and selfless sharing of provisions at every moment.

Thereafter, wash your sins with the water of sincere repentance. Wear the clothes of trueheartedness, purity, servitude, and submissiveness. Keep away from everything that prevents you from remembering Allah or veils you from obeying Him. Say 'Here I am!' to Allah – truly, purely, and sincerely – and, in your supplication, cling to the firmest handle. Circumambulate with your heart, along with the angels, the divine throne, just as you circumambulate the sacred House along with fellow Muslims. Hasten quickly (between Safa and Marwah) out of your fear [of Allah] and disclaim any might or power of your own. As you depart for Mina, move away from your obliviousness and past lapses, and do not wish for that which is not lawful for you or you are not entitled to.

Confess your misdeeds at 'Arafat, and renew your monotheistic covenant with Allah, the Exalted. Approach him and be devotedly conscious of Him at Muzdalifah. Ascend to the heavenly assemblies

with your spirit as you ascend the mountain. Slaughter your whims and greed as you offer the sacrifice. Cast off your low, vile, disparaged carnal desires when you throw the pebbles. Shave off your inner and outer defects when you shave your head. Enter the safety, shade, and protection of Allah by entering the sanctuary and the sacred House after realising the grandeur of its Master and acknowledging His majesty and sovereignty.

Then reach for the Black Stone, pleased with what He has allotted you and humbled before His might. Bid farewell to everything other than Him in your final *tawaf*. Purify (*isfi*, cf. 'Safa') your spirit and your innermost self for the day when you will meet Him by standing at Mount Safa. Be a real man (*mar*', cf. 'Marwah') before Allah, with immaculate characteristics, at Mount Marwah. Uphold the conditions of your hajj, and be loyal to the covenant you have made with your Lord and which will be incumbent upon you until the Day of Resurrection.

Know that Allah only made the hajj obligatory for only one reason. He distinguished it from all other acts of obedience by saying 'incumbent upon people is pilgrimage to the House, for whoever can make the journey' (3:97) for only one reason. The Prophet legislated it and made all its sequential rites part of his Sunnah for only one reason: so that it would serve as a reminder and a metaphor for death, the grave, resurrection, and standing in judgment – in addition to what has already been mentioned about entering Paradise and its inhabitants, entering the Hellfire and its inhabitants by witnessing the rites of hajj, from beginning to end; this is for those who have understanding and are thoughtful.¹⁹

إذا أردت الحج فجرد قلبك لله تعالى من شغل كل شاغل وحجاب كل حاجب، وفوّض أمورك كلها إلى خالقك، وتوكل عليه في جميع ما يظهر من حركاتك وسكناتك، وسلم لقضائه وحكمه وقدره، وودع الدنيا والراحة والخلق، وأخرج من حقوق تلزمك من جهة المخلوقين، ولا تعتمد على زادك وراحتك وأصحابك وقوتك وشبابك ومالك مخافة أن يصير ذلك عدواً ووبالاً....

Visiting Medina

When your eyes fall upon the walls of Medina, remember

that this is the city which Allah chose for His Prophet (S), and chose for His Prophet (S) to migrate to. It was his dwelling, and the Lord legislated the religious law here – both the obligatory and recommended aspects. From here, he fought Allah's enemies, and Allah's religion became manifest, until Allah returned him to Himself and made Medina his resting place.

The pilgrim should imagine himself following in the footsteps of the Messenger of Allah as he frequents the city. Wherever he steps, the Prophet's honourable foot may also have rested there. He should tread lightly, with quietude and awestruck apprehension, thinking of how the Prophet used to walk there and pass through the lanes. He should envision the Prophet's humility and tranquillity as he walked. He should think about what Allah deposited in the heart of the Prophet, such as the tremendous cognizance of Allah; and he should recall how Allah raised the status of remembering the Prophet to the level of remembering Allah himself; and how Allah frustrated the efforts of those who tried to dishonour him, even by raising their voices over the voice of the Prophet. If someone denounces the sanctity of the shariah of the Prophet (S), even for a moment, he will not be safe from being separated from the Prophet because he will have deviated from the Prophet's path.

He should be brimming with hope that Allah would not alienate him after granting him faith and bringing him from his homeland to visit this place, out of love and the desire to set eyes upon the remnants of the Prophet's presence and the walls of his mausoleum. When he reaches the Prophet's mosque, he should remember that the divine law was first established in this courtyard, and

so he should anticipate that Allah would have mercy upon him by allowing him to enter humbly and in veneration. How worthy this place is! The heart of every believer should be humbled before it.

When visiting the Prophet (S), the pilgrim should stand before him and, although he is deceased, greet him the same way he would have if he were still alive. He should not rush towards his grave (disrespectfully) just as he would not have done were this holy person still alive. He should know that the Prophet is aware of his presence, his standing there, and his visit; his greetings and prayers reach the Prophet. He should picture the beloved image of the Prophet (S) in his mind, as if the Prophet were in front of him, and call to mind the Prophet's great rank in his heart.

It is narrated that Allah assigned an angel to his grave to relay the greetings of whoever greets him to the Prophet. This is true even for those who do not physically come to his grave! So what about the one who leaves his homeland and crosses the deserts out of longing to meet him? Seeing the place where he left to meet his Lord, therefore, is sufficient for whoever lost the opportunity to see, in person, this holy personage who was the noblest of people.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

'When you finish supplicating at the grave of the Prophet (S), approach the pulpit, and touch it. Grasp its two bottom-most knobs and wipe your eyes and face upon it, for it is said that it is a remedy for the eyes. Then stand before it, glorify and praise Allah, and ask for your needs, for the Messenger of Allah (S) said, 'Between my pulpit and my house lies one of the gardens of Paradise, and my pulpit stands upon a small gate to Paradise.'

He was asked, 'Is it still a garden today?'

He replied, 'Yes. Had the veils been lifted, you would have seen it.'²⁰

إذا فرغت من الدعاء عند قبر النبي (ص) فأنت المنبر وامسحه بيدك، فخذ برمانيه وهما السفلاوان، وامسح عينيك ووجهك به فإنه يقال: إنه شفاء للعين، وقم عنده، فاحمد الله واثن عليه وسل حاجتك، فإن رسول الله (ص) قال: ما بين منبري وبيتي روضة من رياض الجنة، ومنبري على نزع من نزع الجنة، والنزعة هي الباب الصغير، وسئل (ع) هي روضة اليوم؟ قال: نعم ولو كشف الغطاء لرأيتهم.

Ziyarat of the graves of the Prophet and Imams

The Prophet (S) said,

Whoever visits my grave after my death is like one who migrated to me during my life. If you are not able to do so, then send greetings of peace upon me, for they do reach me.²¹

من زار قبري بعد موتي كمن هاجر إليّ في حياتي، فإن لم تستطيعوا فابعثوا إليّ بالسلام فإنه يبلغني.

And he said to 'Ali (A):

O Abu al-Hasan! Allah has made your grave, and the graves of your descendants, into places and courtyards of Paradise. And Allah has made the hearts of the noblest of His creation and the elite among His slaves yearn for you, such that they would endure degradation and harassment in your way. And so they renovate your tombs and visit them abundantly, seeking nearness to Allah and expressing love for His Messenger. O 'Ali, these are the ones who will especially be granted my intercession and will arrive at my expanse of water in Heaven; they will be my guests and neighbours tomorrow in Paradise.

O 'Ali, whoever constructs your (and your descendants') tombs and witnesses them will be like those who assisted Solomon (A), the son of David (A), in building the holy sanctuary in Jerusalem. Whoever visits these graves will have the reward of seventy hajj pilgrimages performed after the first obligatory hajj. When he returns from visiting you, he will be as free from sins as he was the day his mother gave birth to him.

So rejoice, 'Ali, and give glad tidings of a bliss which no eye has ever seen and no ear has ever heard and no heart has ever imagined to those who love and support you.

However, those vile people with no good in them will rebuke the visitors to your graves just as the adulteress is rebuked for her adultery. They are the worst of my nation. My intercession will never reach them, and they will not arrive at my expanse of water in Heaven.²²

يا أبا الحسن ان الله جعل قبرك وقبر ولدك بقاع الجنة وعرصات من عرصاتها، وان الله جعل قلوب نجباء من خلقه، وصفوة من عبادته تحن إليكم وتحتمل المذلة والأذى فيكم، فيعمرون قبوركم ويكثرون زيارتها تقرباً منهم إلى الله، ومودة منهم لرسوله، أولئك يا علي المخصوصون بشفاعتي والواردون حوضي، وهم زواري وجيراني غدا في الجنة.

يا علي من عمر قبوركم وشاهدها فكأنما أعان سليمان بن داود (ع) على بناء بيت المقدس، ومن زار قبورهم عدل ذلك ثواب سبعين حجة بعد حجة الاسلام، خرج من ذنوبه حتى يرجع من زيارتكم كيوم ولدته أمه.

فابشر يا علي، وبشر أوليائك ومحبيك من النعيم بما لا عين رأت ولا اذن سمعت ولا خطر على قلب بشر، ولكن حثالة من الناس يعيرون زوار قبوركم كما تعير الزانية بزناها، أولئك شرار امتي لأن تنالهم شفاعتي ولا يردون حوضي.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

If any of you perform the hajj pilgrimage in your lifetime but do not visit (the grave of) al-Husayn ibn 'Ali, you will surely have disregarded one of the rights of the Messenger of Allah. For the right of al-Husayn is an obligation from Allah incumbent upon every Muslim.²³

لو أن أحدكم حج دهره ثم لم يزر الحسين بن علي لكان تاركاً حقاً من حقوق رسول الله (ص)، لأن حق الحسين فريضة من الله واجبة على كل مسلم.

There are countless narrations on the merits and rewards of visiting the graves of the infallible Imams (A) – particularly Imam al-Husayn and Imam al-Rida (A) – and

its superiority over hajj, *'umrah*, and military expeditions.

Perhaps the mystery behind the merit of visiting them – above other acts of worship – is that it symbolises devotion to them and connects the visitor to them – to the Prophet (S), to the Commander of the Faithful (A), to Fatimah (A), and to those who follow and love them. Nay, it connects the visitor to all the prophets and their successors. Their visitors become happy, and their prayers are answered. They renew their oaths of allegiance. They revive these people's directives and censure their enemies. In all that, they hope for what is with Allah – who never disappoints those who place their hope in Him – and seek His pleasure. Glory be to Him: He is pleased with whoever is pleased with Him!

In addition to all that, it is still a means of worshipping Allah, the Exalted. It pleases Him (honoured be His remembrance) and delights His Messenger along with his descendants and successors. Since performing the prescribed acts of worship brings them happiness, it also brings them happiness that way. The tremendous value of the believer before Allah has been established, such that there is a divine reward for maintaining relations with someone, acting beneficently towards someone, and bringing happiness to someone simply because that person is a believer. So what do you reckon about someone whom Allah has protected from wrongdoing and purified from stain? This is someone whom Allah has made the leader of the believers and an exemplar for the God-conscious – someone, for whose sake, Allah created the heavens and the earth; made him His path, His way, His eye, His decisive argument, the door through which to reach Him, and the rope connecting Him with His

worshippers among the messengers, prophets, divinely sent proofs, and saints.

Although their graves are shrines to their lofty sanctified souls and their illuminated spirits living in the purgatory realm, they are nonetheless present there, witnessing what is happening:

Alive, sustained in the presence of their Lord, delighted with what He has granted them from His grace. (3:169-170)

Even though hajj, *'umrah*, military expeditions and the like require spending money, keeping up hopes, dispatching men, leaving hometowns, enduring hardships, carrying out ceremonial rites, and being present at specific places, they still do not hold the same reward as visiting the shrines. For although these are means of worshipping Allah (the Exalted), responding to His commands (honoured be His remembrance), pleasing Him, and pleasing His saints – merely due to the performance of worship – they do not contain all the other merits that we have called attention to here.

These actions can be performed by anyone who claims to abide by the religion of Islam – even if that person acts contrary to it. However, only those who recognise the value and rank of these holy personages – even partially – will visit the shrines.

Imam al-Rida (A) said,

Every Imam holds an oath upon the necks of his adherents and followers. One of the highest ways to demonstrate loyalty and fulfil that oath is to visit their graves. Whoever visits them – while yearning to visit them, and attesting to what they [the Prophet (S) and Imams (A)] have encouraged people to do – will receive their intercession on the Day of Resurrection.²⁴

إن لكل إمام عهداً في عتق أوليائه وشيعته، وإن من غاية الوفاء بالعهد وحسن الأداء زيارة

قبورهم، فمن زارهم رغبة في زيارتهم وتصديقاً بما رغبوا فيه، كان أئمتهم شفاعتهم يوم القيامة.

Notes

- ¹ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 5, p. 16.
- ² al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 4, p. 268.
- ³ Narration mentioned by Ibn 'Abd al-Birr in *al-Tamhid* (n.l.: n.d.), vol. 21, p. 226.
- ⁴ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 2, p. 7.
- ⁵ *Sa'i*: Literally 'the exertion of effort'; conventionally used to refer to the pilgrimage ritual whereby the pilgrim is required to walk between the two mountains of *Safa* and *Marwah* seven times.
- ⁶ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 5, p. 23.
- ⁷ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 11, p. 83.
- ⁸ With reference to the verse of the Holy Qur'an where Allah commands Abraham: 'And call for the pilgrimage amongst men; they shall come to you on foot and on every type of mount, coming from all remote directions' (22:27).
- ⁹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 64, p. 337.
- ¹⁰ *al-bayt al-ma'mur*: This term has been used in reported narrations to indicate a spiritual heavenly reflection of the *Ka'bah*.
- ¹¹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 11, p. 174.
- ¹² al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 4, p. 406.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 184.
- ¹⁴ The corner of the *Ka'bah* that points towards Yemen.
- ¹⁵ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 13, p. 342.
- ¹⁶ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 96, p. 220.
- ¹⁷ *Sa'i*: Literally translates into the English language as 'the exertion of effort'. The word is conventionally used to refer to the pilgrimage ritual whereby the pilgrim is required to walk between the two mountains of *Safa* and *Marwah* seven times.
- ¹⁸ The place in which the pilgrims are required to spend the night after the stay at 'Arafat.
- ¹⁹ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 47.
- ²⁰ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 4, p. 553.
- ²¹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 96, p. 379.
- ²² al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 14, p. 384.
- ²³ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 98, p. 3.
- ²⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 4, p. 567.

SIXTH TREATISE

The Remaining Righteous Deeds

In it are five books...

❖ Repentance ❖

Introduction

Repentance is the disassociation of the heart from sin and returning from being far from Allah to being near Him. In other words, it is the relinquishing of disobedience in the present, the resolution to desist from it in the future, and the rectification of past shortcomings.

Repentance is immediately necessary at every moment. It must be solely for the sake of Allah – not for the sake of wealth or status, out of fear of a ruler, or for no reason at all – and the person should genuinely feel regretful. ‘Regret’ means anguish in the heart and sorrow over the sin. This is the true spirit of repentance. The intensity of this feeling changes, and increases as knowledge, faith, and realisation in the heart grow. This is true repentance.

The Prophet (S) said,

الندم توبة.¹ Regret is repentance.

For regret is not devoid of an awareness which inspires or requires it along with a determined resolution that follows it and ensues from it. From both sides, therefore, regret is flanked by its fruit and its cause.

The path to repentance is to keep in mind:

- ❖ the narrations regarding its merits

- ❖ knowledge of the hideousness of sin
- ❖ the severity of punishment and the inability of the soul to endure it
- ❖ the glorious rank of the Hereafter in contrast to the ignobility of this world
- ❖ the imminence of death
- ❖ the sweetness of knowledge of the divine and prayer – a sweetness denied to the one who persists in sin
- ❖ fear of being granted respite instead of being taken to account right away
- ❖ gradually inculcating goodness
- ❖ ridding one's self of the causes of persistence in sinning – namely, being deceived by this world, love of this world, and unrealisable hopes.

Allah said:

Repent to Allah collectively O believers, that you may be successful. (24:31)

O you who believe, repent to Allah with an unswerving repentance; perhaps your Lord shall absolve your sins. (66:8)

'Unswerving' means 'being sincere to Allah without any blemish'.

And He said:

Indeed Allah loves those who repent and those who purify themselves. (2:222)

The Messenger of Allah (S) said,

A person who repents loves Allah; and a person who repents from a sin is like one who has no sin.²

التائب حبيب الله، والتائب من الذنب كمن لا ذنب له.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

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When His servant repents, Allah is more delighted than a traveller who loses his mount and provisions in the middle of a dark night and then finds them.³

إن الله أشد فرحاً بتوبة عبده من رجل أضل راحلته و زاده في ليلة ظلماء فوجدها.

Regarding Allah's words 'repent to Allah with an unswerving repentance' (66:8), Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

'That is the sin that is never repeated.'

It was asked: 'Who would never repeat it?'

He replied, 'Allah loves His servant who is often tempted and often repents.'⁴

قال الصادق (ع) في قوله تعالى: ﴿تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَصُوحًا﴾ قال: هو الذنب الذي لا يعود إليه أبداً، قيل: وأينا لم يعد؟ قال: يا فلان، إن الله يحب من عباده المفقن التواب.

He meant the one who sins and repents a lot.

He also said,

'If a slave truly repents to Allah, Allah loves him and conceals his wrongdoings.'

It was asked, 'How does He conceal them?'

He said, 'His two angels forget what they wrote, and Allah reveals to his limbs and the patches of earth he stood upon that they should conceal his sins. And so, when he meets Allah, he meets Him with nothing to testify against him about any of his sins.'⁵

قال: إذا تاب العبد توبة نصوحاً أحبه الله فستر عليه، قيل: وكيف يستر عليه؟ قال: ينسى ملكيه ما كانا يكتبان عليه، ويوحى الله إلى جوارحه وإلى بقاع الأرض أن أكتمي عليه ذنوبه، فيلقى الله حين يلقاه وليس شيء يشهد عليه بشيء من الذنوب.

Faith and sins

Know that the more the light of faith shines upon the heart, the more it inspires regret over past sins. The heart

is anguished as it sees, through the shining light of faith, how veiled it had become from its beloved – just like someone whom the sunlight shines upon after being in the shadows. The light dispels the clouds and lifts the veils, and he sees his beloved. He had neared destruction, but then the fires of love blazed in his heart, urging him to reform himself.

Awareness, regret, and the intent to reform all combine to motivate the person to relinquish the misdeed in the present, avoid it in the future, and make reparations for the past. They, in sequence, form the meaning of repentance; repentance involves all three.

Often, repentance is considered to only be regret; in this case, awareness of the sin would be a necessary prerequisite; abandoning the sin is the fruit and a later outcome (as we mentioned before). So whoever explores the meaning and necessity of repentance with the light of insight to see what repentance is will not doubt that he must repent.

This is because when he realises the meaning of necessity – what is necessary to reach everlasting happiness and salvation from eternal destruction – he realizes that happiness can only be attained in the everlasting realm through meeting Allah. He realizes that whoever is veiled from Allah must necessarily be in misery, separated from whatever he desires, burnt both by the fire of separation and the fire of Hell.

He realises that the only things that keep him away from meeting Allah are his carnal desires, his intimacy with this transient world, and his devotion to loving things which he must inevitably part from. He also realises that the only things that will bring him nearer to

Allah are severing his heart from the embellishments of this world and approaching Allah by seeking intimacy with Him through continually remembering Him, and, as much as possible, seeking to love Him by recognising His majesty and beauty. He also realises that sins are a means of shunning Allah and following the devil-lovers, the enemies of Allah who distance people from the divine presence by veiling them and moving them farther from Allah.

These realisations should be sought to spur the person to action by placing a sense of responsibility on his shoulders. Awareness of the harm caused by sins should impel a person to shun sins, and anyone who does not desist from sins loses this part of faith.

This is what the Holy Prophet (S) meant when he said,

An adulterer does not commit adultery while he is a believer.⁶

لا يزني الزاني حين يزني وهو مؤمن.

By this, he did not mean that the adulterer denies belief in Allah, His oneness, His attributes, His books, or His messengers, for neither adultery nor disobedience conflict with those beliefs. Rather, he meant that adultery is in conflict with faith since adultery distances a person from Allah and is abhorrent to Him. There is not only one door to faith. Rather, as is narrated, it has seventy-odd doors – the highest of which is to profess that there is no god but Allah, and the lowest of which is to remove obstacles from the public road.

This is similar to the idea that a person is not a single existence but rather has seventy-odd forms of existence – the highest being the heart and spirit, and the lowest being the ability to remove annoyances from the skin.

Trimming the moustache and clipping the nails cleanse the skin from dirt, and these are practices that distinguish humans from untamed beasts – filthy with their own droppings, terrifying with their long claws and talons.

Faith is like a person in this regard. Faith is no longer faith without belief in the oneness of Allah, just as a person is no longer a person without the soul. However, a person who only believes in divine monotheism and the divine message is like a person who has lost his eyes and inner and outer limbs, and all that remains is the soul.

At this point, he would be on the verge of death. His weak, lone soul would be about to abandon him, and the limbs which strengthened and preserved it would be ready to let it go. This is the same as a person who only has the root of faith but falls short of acting upon it. The tree of his faith is sure to fall when gusts of wind strike it as the footsteps of the Angel of Death approach, and the Angel of Death appears.

Every bit of faith which is not rooted in his soul and whose branches do not spread out into deeds will not survive the stormy gales of terror at the first hint of the appearance of the Angel of Death, and a miserable end would be feared for such a person. But not so for the one who has been quenched with the water of obedience throughout his days, such that it has become firmly fixed and entrenched in him, and this becomes manifest at the time of his death. Even the hearts of those with deep knowledge of Allah are struck with fear of the calamities of death and its terrifying approach, and only a few can withstand this.

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Repentance is for all

Know that repentance is necessary for all people in all conditions. No one should ever separate himself from it. Allah said,

And repent to Allah collectively. (24:31)

He was speaking to all people generally. The light of insight also indicates this, since 'repentance' means to turn back from a path which leads away from Allah and towards Satan. However, only an intelligent person would be expected to recognise this. The intellectual instinct only develops after the development of the carnal desires, anger, and other blameworthy characteristics which Satan uses as his medium to seduce people.

The intellect only reaches perfection around the age of forty years. Its formative stage is only complete at adolescence, and its fundamentals only begin to appear after the age of seven. The carnal desires are the troops of Satan, while intellects are the troops of the angels. When the two meet, they inevitably fight since neither allows the other to persist. They are in opposition, antagonistic – like night and day, light and darkness; when one prevails, it necessarily irks the other.

If the carnal desires develop fully in a child or youth before the intellect is perfected, the forces of Satan will have a head start. They will seize the grounds and descend upon the heart, which will incline to them. Without doubt, that person will habitually side with the carnal desires and be overpowered by them; uprooting them will be very difficult.

Then, the intellect – which is the legion of Allah, the saviour of His saints from the hands of His enemies – will

appear bit by bit. If it does not develop to full strength, the kingdom of the heart will surrender to Satan, who will carry out what he swore when he said 'I will surely bring his descendants under my sway, all but a few' (17:62). But if the intellect develops to full strength, its first task will be to quell the troops of Satan by breaking the carnal desires, abandoning habits, and fighting inner inclinations so that worshipfulness will prevail. Repentance has no meaning other than this: turning back from the path whose guide is the carnal desires and whose sentry is Satan, and returning to the path of Allah, the Exalted.

In all of existence, there is no person whose intellect is not preceded by his carnal desires; the drive which serves as a tool of Satan precedes the drive which serves as a tool for the angels. Returning from that former state, which was reached with the aid of the carnal desires, is essential for every person.

The necessity to repent all the time and in every circumstance can be elucidated as follows. No one's limbs are free from committing sins. Even if, sometimes, the limbs cease committing sins, the heart is still inclined to commit sins. And even if the heart is free from this, it is not free from Satan's insinuations, directing it away from the remembrance of Allah. But even if the heart is free from that, it is not free from its own neglectfulness and shortcomings in attaining its full capacity of knowledge of Allah, His attributes, and His signs.

All these deficiencies have causes. Relinquishing their causes by concentrating on their opposites is a way to return to one path from an opposing path – and the meaning of repentance is this return. People should never imagine that they are truly free of these deficiencies;

instead, they simply vary in their extent. The essential presence of deficiency is inescapable – except for the prophets and saints (A), whose misdeeds are unlike ours. Their misdeeds are failing to remember to Allah continuously or busying themselves with merely permissible (rather than praiseworthy) things. Because of that, they deprive themselves of more reward.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

The Messenger of Allah (S) used to repent to Allah and seek His forgiveness one hundred times every day and night, even though he had not committed any sin. Allah singles out His saints with misfortunes to reward them, without them sinning.⁷

إن رسول الله (ص) كان يتوب إلى الله ويستغفره في كل يوم وليلة مائة مرة من غير ذنب، إن الله يخص أوليائه بالمصائب ليأجرهم عليها من غير ذنب.

He means here that they do not commit sins like we do; for each person's sins are in accordance with his ability and station with Allah.

Therefore, know that, for rectifying the carnal desires, it is insufficient simply to relinquish them in the future. Rather, it is necessary to erase their traces which have been impressed on the heart through the light of obedience. The Prophet (S) said,

Follow up misdeeds with good deeds to erase them.⁸

اتبع السيئة بالحسن تمحها.

The good deed which erases the bad deed should be suitable to the misdeed. For instance, one should rectify listening to vain talk with listening to the Quran and attending gatherings where Allah is remembered. Or, he should rectify sitting in the mosque while in a state of ritual impurity by worshipping in the mosque when not

in that condition (although this is not required by shariah).

It is narrated that a man said to the Messenger of Allah (S),

'I was pawing at a woman and did everything except violate her. So judge against me according to the law of Allah.'

He asked, 'Did you not pray with us?'

The man said, 'Yes.'

The Prophet (S) said, 'Indeed, good deeds eliminate bad deeds.'⁹

روي ان رجلاً قال لرسول الله (ص): إني عاجلت امرأة فاصبت منها كل شيء إلا المسيس، فاقض علي بحكم الله، فقال: أما صليت معنا؟ فقال: بلى، فقال: إن الحسنات يذهبن السيئات.

It is essential that regret take place soon after realising a misdeed, and that the negative effects be erased before they pile up on and reign over his heart and refuse to be erased. Allah said:

Repentance to Allah is only for those who do evil out of ignorance, then soon repent. (4:17)

The meaning of 'soon' here is soon after realising the sin.

Allah says: 'Repentance is not for those who do evil up until death comes to one of them, and he says, "Now I repent"' (4:18). About this, Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

That is when he finally witnesses the Hereafter.¹⁰

ذلك إذا عاين أمر الآخرة.

This is because repentance is accepted before witnessing the Hereafter, as is narrated from the Messenger of Allah (S),

Whoever does not hurry to repent and, instead, delays it lies between two grave dangers. The first is that darkness due to disobedience will

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build up in his heart, and it will reign over him and become part of his nature and will not allow itself to be eliminated. The second is that sickness or death could descend upon him, and he would not have any opportunity to eradicate the sins.¹¹

ومن ترك المبادرة إلى التوبة بالتسوية، كان بين خطرين عظيمين: أحدهما: أن تتراكم الظلمة على قلبه من المعاصي، حتى يصير رينا وطبعاً فلا يقبل الخو، والثاني: أن يعاجله المرض أو الموت، فلا يجد مهلة للاشتغال بالخو.

Thus, it is narrated,

Most of the cries of the people in Hell will be due to the fact that they delayed their repentance.¹²

إن أكثر صياح أهل النار من التسوية.

Acceptance of repentance

Know that if you understand what it means for repentance to be accepted, you will have no doubt that all genuine acts of repentance are accepted. Those who see with the light of insight (which is derived from the light of the Qur'an) know that every sound heart will be accepted by Allah and at ease in the Hereafter in the proximity of Allah. They know that since Allah created the heart free from blemish, everything it generates comes from its innate divine disposition (*fitrah*). It only loses its tranquillity due to the turbidity of the dust and gloom of sins which wear out its face. They know that the fire of regret burns away this dust, and the light of good deeds erases the shadows of misdeeds from the face of the heart; and that the murkiness of disobedience cannot survive the light of good deeds, just like the darkness of night cannot survive the light of day – or, rather, like filth and grime cannot survive pure soap and hot water – unless the sins

have accumulated so much that they have become part of one's nature and prevailing state of being.

This is like someone who dives deep into filth and allows it to build up in the pockets and folds of his clothes. Such a heart would never return or repent, even if the person said 'I repent' with his tongue. Still, this proclamation would suffice for that person's repentance – with all its conditions – to be accepted. Allah says: 'It is He who accepts the repentance from His slaves...the Forgiver of sins and Acceptor of repentance' (42:25; 40:3).

The Prophet (S) said,

Good deeds remove bad deeds just as water removes filth.¹³

إن الحسنات يذهبن السيئات كما يذهب الماء الوسخ.



Had you committed sins, as many as would reach the sky, and then regretted thereafter, Allah would forgive you.¹⁴

لو عملتم الخطايا حتى تبلغ السماء ثم ندمتم لتاب الله عليكم.

It is related,

Imam al-Baqir (A) said to Muhammad ibn Muslim, 'If a believer repents, his sins will be forgiven. Therefore, a believer should act as someone who starts a new life after repenting and being forgiven. Beware, by Allah, this is reserved only for those who have faith.'

Muhammad ibn Muslim asked, 'What if he repeats the sins after repenting and seeking forgiveness, and then repents again?'

Imam (A) replied, 'O Muhammad ibn Muslim, if a believing slave regretted his sin, sought Allah's forgiveness, and repented, could you see Allah not accepting his repentance?'

Muhammad ibn Muslim asked, 'What if he does that repetitively: sinning, then repenting and asking for forgiveness?'

The Imam (A) said, 'Every time the believer repeats seeking

forgiveness and repentance, Allah will respond with forgiveness again. Allah is Forgiving and Merciful; He accepts repentance and pardons misdeeds. So beware of disheartening the believers about the mercy of Allah!¹⁵

عن أبي جعفر (ع) قال: يا محمد بن مسلم، ذنوب المؤمن إذا تاب منها مغفورة له، فليعمل المؤمن لما يستأنف بعد التوبة والمغفرة، أما والله إنها ليست إلا لأهل الإيمان. قال: فقلت: فإن عاد بعد التوبة والاستغفار من الذنوب وعاد في التوبة؟ فقال: يا محمد بن مسلم، أترى العبد المؤمن يندم على ذنبه ويستغفر منه ويتوب ثم لا يقبل الله توبته؟ قلت: فإنه فعل ذلك مراراً، يذنب ثم يتوب ويستغفر [الله]. فقال: كلما عاد المؤمن بالاستغفار والتوبة، عاد الله عليه بالمغفرة وإن الله غفور رحيم، يقبل التوبة ويعفو عن السيئات، فإياك أن تقنط المؤمنين من رحمة الله.

It is also related,

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said, 'It may happen that a person would commit a sin, but Allah would allow him to enter Paradise despite that sin.'

It was asked, 'Allah would allow him to enter Paradise despite his sin?'

He replied, 'Yes. Although he sinned, he may have remained fearful of Allah and disgusted with himself. Hence, Allah has mercy upon him and allows him to enter Paradise.'¹⁶

قال الصادق (ع): إن الرجل ليذنب الذنب فيدخله الله بالذنوب الجنة، قيل يدخله الله بالذنوب الجنة؟ قال: نعم إنه ليذنب فلا يزال منه خائفاً ماقتاً لنفسه فيرجه الله فيدخله الجنة.

Categories of sins

Know that sins are divided into those which are between the slave and Allah, and those which pertain to the rights of the other slaves of Allah. Sins of the first category are either forgiven, or else there is hope that there will be forgiven.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

'Sins are of three categories: the forgiven sin, the unforgiven sin, and

the sin whose perpetrator we have hope for but fear for.'

It was said, 'O Commander of the Faithful, elucidate upon them for us'.

He said, 'Certainly. The forgiven sin is that which Allah has penalised the slave for in this world, and Allah, the Exalted, is too kind and generous to punish His slave twice.

'The sin that Allah does not forgive is when some slaves [of Allah] oppress others. When Allah manifests Himself before His slaves (in the next world), He will swear an oath upon Himself, saying: "By My dignity and majesty, no oppression of any oppressor shall pass Me by, even if it is as insignificant as the slap of a hand, the swipe of a palm, or even a ram charging a ewe with its horns." He will return like for like among all His servants until no grievance remains for anyone; then Allah will send them forth for accounting.

'The third category of sin is the sin which Allah has concealed from the rest of Creation while He has granted its perpetrator the opportunity to repent. He is frightened of his sins but hopeful of his Lord. Thus, we have the same attitude towards him that he has himself: we hope for mercy for him, yet we fear that he will be chastised.'¹⁷

قال أمير المؤمنين (ع) الذنوب ثلاثة: فذنوب مغفورة وذنوب غير مغفورة وذنوب نرجو لصاحبه ونخاف عليه، قيل: يا أمير المؤمنين فينهي لنا. قال: نعم، أما الذنوب المغفورة، فعبد عاقبه الله على ذنبه في الدنيا، فالله أحلم وأكرم من أن يعاقب عبده مرتين، وأما الذنوب الذي لا يغفره الله، فمظالم العباد بعضهم لبعض، إن الله تبارك وتعالى إذا برز خلقه أقسم قسما على نفسه، فقال: وعزتي وجلالي لا يجوزني ظلم ظالم، ولو كلف بكف ولو مسحة بكف ولو نطحة ما بين القرناء إلى الجماء، فيقتص للعباد بعضهم من بعض، حتى لا يبقى لاحد على أحد مظلمة ثم يبعثهم للحساب.

It is possible that he was referring to repentance wherein all the of the necessary conditions may not have been adhered to since – as you know – when all the conditions of repentance are observed, the sin being repented for will undoubtedly be forgiven.

Sins are also divided into major and minor sins. Allah says:

If you avoid the major aspects of that which you have been prohibited from, We shall absolve you of your misdeeds. (4:31)

Those who avoid the major sins and indecent acts, except the slight faults. (52:32)

The Prophet (S) said,

The five (daily) prayers and the Friday prayer – from one Friday to the next – expiate for whatever (sins were) performed between them, provided that the major sins are avoided.¹⁸

الصلاة الخمس والجمعة إلى الجمعة تكفر ما بينهما إن اجتنب الكبائر.

Many narrations explain the major sins; however, some of the narrations differ from each other. Regarding the verse 'If you avoid the major aspects of that which you have been prohibited from, We shall absolve you of your misdeeds' (4:31), it is narrated that Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

The major sins are those which Allah has decreed Hellfire for.¹⁹

الكبائر التي أوجب الله عليها النار.

It is also related that he was asked about the major sins. He replied:

'The Book of 'Ali (A) mentions them as seven: disbelief in Allah; murder; disrespecting parents; consuming interest after being aware (of its prohibition); usurping the property of the orphan oppressively; deserting the army; and abandoning the teachings of the Prophet (S) after coming towards him (*al-ta'arrub ba'd al-hijrah*).'

He was then asked, 'Which is a greater sin – oppressively usurping a single dirham from an orphan, or abandoning prayer?'

He replied, 'Abandoning prayer.'

The man retorted, 'But you did not mention abandoning prayer as a major sin.'

The Imam asked, 'What was the first thing that I mentioned to you?'

The man replied, 'Disbelief.'

The Imam then replied, 'A person who abandons prayer is a disbeliever' – meaning, without any valid excuse.²⁰

عنه (ع) أنه سئل عن الكبائر فقال: هن في كتاب علي (ع) سبع: الكفر بالله، وقتل النفس، وعقوق الوالدين، وأكل الربا بعد البيعة، وأكل مال اليتيم ظلماً، والفرار من الزحف، والتعرب بعد الهجرة. قيل له: فأكل درهم من مال اليتيم ظلماً أكبر أم ترك الصلاة؟ قال: ترك الصلاة. قيل: فما عددت ترك الصلاة في الكبائر، فقال: أي شيء أول ما قلت لك؟ قال: الكفر، قال فإن تارك الصلاة كافر، يعني من غير علة.

It is narrated that Imam al-Kazim (A) was asked about the major sins – what they are, and how many there are. He wrote back,

When someone keeps away from those things that Allah has promised the Hellfire for, Allah will absolve his misdeeds – if he is a believer. There are seven things which necessitate a person be punished by Hellfire: unlawful killing, disrespecting parents, consuming usury, abandoning the teachings of the Prophet (S) after coming towards him, falsely accusing a chaste woman of indecency, usurping the wealth of the orphan, and deserting the army.²¹

عن الكاظم (ع) أنه سئل عن الكبائر كم هي وما هي؟ فكتب: الكبائر من اجتنب ما وعد الله عليه النار كفر الله عنه سيئاته إذا كان مؤمناً، والسبع الموجبات قتل النفس الحرام، وعقوق الوالدين، وأكل الربا، والتعرب بعد الهجرة وقذف الحصنة، وأكل مال اليتيم، والفرار من الزحف.

It is narrated that Imam al-Jawad (A) said, 'I heard my father (A) say, "I heard my father Musa ibn Ja'far (A) say:

'Amr ibn 'Ubayd once came to Abu 'Abd Allah [Imam al-Sadiq]. When he greeted him and sat, he recited this verse: 'Those who keep away from the major sins and indecencies' (53:32) – then stopped.

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Abu 'Abd Allah (A) asked him, 'What made you stop?'

The man replied, 'I want to know what the Book of Allah says the major sins are.'

The Imam told him, 'Certainly, 'Amr. The most serious major sin is associating partners with Allah. Allah says, "And whosoever associates anyone with Allah, Allah deprives him of Paradise." (5:72)

'Next is despairing of Allah's succour, because Allah says, "No one despairs of Allah's succour except the disbelieving people" (12:87).

'Thereafter is feeling secure from Allah's plan, as Allah, the Exalted, says, "No one feels secure from the plan of Allah except the losers" (7:99).

'Also among them are disrespect to parents, since Allah has made the person who is disrespectful to his parents into a tyrannical wretch;²²

'Killing –except for the sake of justice – because Allah says [about the killer] "his recompense is the Hellfire, to abide therein eternally" (4:93);

'Wrongly accusing a chaste woman, since Allah, the Exalted, says, "They are cursed in the world and the Hereafter, and for them is a grave punishment" (24:23);

'Usurping the wealth of the orphan, as Allah, the Exalted, says, "They consume nought but fire in their bellies. They will be roasted in a blazing inferno";

'Deserting the army, as Allah says, "And whoever turns his back on that day, unless it be in a stratagem of war or to retreat to troops (of his own), he draws upon himself the wrath of Allah and his abode is the Hellfire – what an evil fate" (8:16);

'Usury, as Allah says, "Those who devour usury shall not stand except like the standing of one whom Satan confuses by his touch" (2:275);

'Magic, for Allah says, "And they knew that whoever bought it (magic) would have no share in the Hereafter" (2:102);

'Adultery, as Allah says, "And whoever does that has committed a grave sin. The punishment shall be multiplied for him on the Day of Resurrection, and he shall enter it humiliated" (25:68-69);

'Sinfully giving false testimony which drowns the witness in Hell, as Allah says, "Indeed those who sell the covenant of Allah, and their oaths, for a meagre price – they are those who have no share in the Hereafter" (3:77);

'Niggardliness, for Allah says, "And whoever is niggardly, he shall bring forth on the Day of Resurrection whatever he withheld" (3:161);

'Withholding the obligatory *zakat* tax, as Allah, the Exalted, says, "Their foreheads, their flanks and their backs shall be branded with it" (9:35);

'Providing false witness or concealing one's testimony, for Allah says, "And whoever conceals it (testimony) is a sinner by his heart" (2:283);

'Drinking wine, for Allah has prohibited it just as He prohibited idol-worship;²³

'Intentionally abandoning the prayer – or any such thing that Allah has made obligatory – as the Messenger of Allah said, "Whoever abandons the prayer intentionally has excluded himself from the protection of Allah and that of His messenger";

'And breach of contract and cutting off family ties, as Allah says "upon them is a curse, and for them is an evil abode." (13:25)'

As 'Amr exited the place, he was heard letting forth a weeping wail and saying: 'Damned is whoever speaks out of his own whims and disputes with you [the family of the Prophet] about your merit and knowledge.'²⁴

دخل عمرو بن عبيد على ابي عبد الله (ع)، فلما سلم وجلس تلا هذه الآية، ﴿الَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كِبَائِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشِ﴾، ثم أمسك، فقال له ابو عبد الله (ع) ما أسكتك؟ قال: احب ان أعرف الكبائر من كتاب الله عز وجل، فقال: نعم يا عمرو، أكبر الكبائر الاشرار بالله، يقول الله: ﴿مَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ﴾. وبعده الأيئاس من روح الله، لأن الله عز وجل يقول: ﴿لَا يَأْسُ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ﴾. ثم الأمن من مكر الله، لأن الله عز وجل يقول: ﴿فَلَا يَأْمَنُ مَكْرَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ﴾. ومنها عقوق الوالدين، لأن الله سبحانه جعل العاق جباراً شقيماً، وقتل النفس التي حرم الله إلا بالحق، لأن الله عز وجل يقول: ﴿فَمَنْ خَالَفَهَا فَاُولَئِكَ يَلْعَنُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْعَاقِ﴾، وقذف اخصنة، لأن الله عز وجل يقول:

their five daily prayers and avoid the major sins.

Furthermore, avoiding the major sins only absolves the minor sins if a person is able to and would want to commit them. For instance, if a man has the possibility to engage in unlawful intercourse with a woman, but instead restrains himself from carrying out the full act and restricts himself to looking and touching. His efforts to abstain from the full act have more of an illuminating effect on his heart in comparison to the detrimental effect of his wrongdoing in looking at her. This is what is meant when it is said that avoiding major sins expiates for minor sins. However, if his abstinence is due to inability, or fear, or something like that, then it will not expiate for minor sins.

Similarly, if someone has no desire to drink alcohol, avoiding it does not expiate for committing minor sins which are a prelude to it, such as listening to songs and lutes – even if he is able to drink it.

How minor sins become major sins

Know that minor sins can become major for certain reasons – for instance, persisting in committing them. Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

There are no minor sins when a person persists in committing them; and there are no major sins when a person seeks forgiveness.²⁵

لا صغيرة مع الاصرار ولا كبيرة مع الاستغفار.

An analogy is when water drips continuously, drop by drop, onto a rock and leaves an imprint on it; if the same amount of water were poured onto the rock all at once, it would not affect it at all.

Regarding the words of Allah, ‘And they do not persist in what they have done while being aware (of its error)’ (3:135), Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

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Persistence in sins is when a person commits a sin but neither seeks forgiveness nor counsels himself to seek repentance. That is persistence.²⁶

الإصرار أن يذنب الذنب فلا يستغفر ولا يحدث نفسه بتوبة، فذلك الإصرار.

Minor sins also become major sins when a person makes light of his sin. When a slave of Allah deems his offence severe, it is lessened before Allah by the same amount. However, when a slave of Allah deems his offence light, it is magnified before Allah by the same amount. This is because, when the perpetrator magnifies the enormity of his sin, he does so because his heart is disgusted at the sin, and this disgust lessens the sin's impact on his heart. However, when the perpetrator belittles his sin, he does so because his heart has an affinity towards this sin, and this affinity affects his heart intensely. The aim should be to enlighten the heart through obedience, and to beware of blackening the heart through disobedience. Hence, what occurs in the heart should not be neglected.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

The Messenger of Allah (S) said, 'Beware of sins which are regarded to be insignificant, for they will not be forgiven.'

He was asked, 'What does "sins that are regarded to be insignificant" mean?'

He replied, 'When a person commits a sin, and then says, "Glad tidings be to me if I will have committed only this sin."²⁷

قال رسول الله (ص): اتقوا الخفريات من الذنوب فإنها لا تغفر، قيل: وما الخفريات؟ قال: الرجل يذنب الذنب فيقول طوبى لي لو لم يكن غير ذلك.



Allah loves the slave who implores Him when he commits a grave

offence, and detests the slave who belittles a light offence.²⁸

إن الله يحب العبد أن يطلب إليه في الجرم العظيم، ويغض العبد أن يستخف بالجرم اليسير

Imam al-Kazim (A) said,

Do not regard many good deeds as numerous, and do not regard a small number of sins as few. For sins accumulate and become many. Fear Allah in private to such an extent that you would give away half of whatever you own.²⁹

لا تستكثروا كثير الخير ولا تستقلوا قليل الذنوب، فإن الذنوب تجتمع حتى تكون كثيراً، وخافوا الله في السر حتى تعطوا من أنفسكم النصف.

Minor sins also become major sins when the perpetrator enjoys committing them, brags about them, sees the opportunity to commit them as a blessing, or is heedless of the fact that committing minor sins brings about wretchedness. When the slave of Allah derives more and more pleasure from committing minor sins, the sins become more and more serious, as do their effect in blackening the heart. For sins are destructive. If a slave of Allah is urged to commit minor sins and Satan exults as the slave praises these sins, this should be a disaster for the slave, for his foe has overcome him, and he has been distanced from Allah.

Minor sins also become major sins when the perpetrator underestimates Allah's watch over him, Allah's tolerance, and the respite that He grants. He does not realise that Allah grants him respite out of abhorrence so he can sin more; instead, he reckons that Allah is granting him the ability to disobey out of consideration for him. This makes him feel secure from the artifice of Allah, and his ignorance allows him to be ambushed and deceived by his view of Allah; as Allah says:

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They say: 'Why does Allah not punish us for our words?' The Hellfire suffices them; they shall burn therein. What an evil abode! (58:8)

Minor sins also become major sins when a person commits a minor sin and then makes it known to others or brings it to the attention of someone else. This is a serious offence against the protective veil that Allah lowered upon him. Others who hear about or witness his sins are incited towards evil; both of these crimes combine with his initial sin and make it even cruder. If, in addition, it transpires that he did encourage someone else to commit this sin by providing the initial grounds, it becomes a fourth crime and a monstrous act.

This is because Allah manifests beauty, conceals the ugliness [of sins], and does not expose hidden [faults]; these are among His attributes. Manifesting one's faults, therefore, is a rejection of this blessing.

Imam al-Rida (A) said that the Messenger of Allah (S) said,

One who conceals his good deed is recompensed with seventy good deeds. One who publicises an evil deed shall be forsaken, but one who conceals will be forgiven for it.³⁰

المستتر بالحسنة يعدل سبعين حسنة والمذيع بالسينة مخذول، والمستتر بما مغفور له.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Whenever someone comes to us seeking understanding, knowledge of the Qur'an, and knowledge of exegesis, then invite that person towards us. But whenever someone comes to us displaying a fault that Allah had concealed for him, then send him away.³¹

من جاءنا يلتمس الفقه والقرآن وتفسيره فدعوه، ومن جاءنا يبدي عورة قد سترها الله عليه فحوه.

Minor sins also become major sins when the sinner is aware that his sin will be imitated. If he commits it where

he can be seen, that increases the severity of his sin. For instance, when a recognised scholar wears silk or gold, takes money from a suspicious source, or uses his tongue freely to reproach, these sins will be mimicked. Even when he dies, his evil will remain spread around the world. Fortunate is he whose sins die with him. The scholar, therefore, has a double duty – first, he must abandon sinning; and, second, he must conceal the sins he has committed. Just as the burden of his sins will be multiplied, his reward will also be multiplied if people imitate his good deeds.

Relinquishing sin

It is narrated from the Prophet:

Every day, when dawn breaks, and evening twilight fades away, two angels call out together in four voices.

One says, 'Would that this creation had never been created!'

The other says, 'Would they had only realised the purpose of their creation after they were created!'

Another says, 'Would they had acted upon what they knew, even if they did not realise the purpose of their creation!'

The last says, 'Would they had at least repented for what they had done – even if they did not act according to what they knew!'³²

ما من يوم يطلع فجره ولا ليلة غاب شفقها، إلا وملكان يتجاوبان بأربعة أصوات، يقول أحدهما يا ليت هذا الخلق لم يخلقوا، ويقول الآخر: يا ليتهم اذ خلقوا علموا لماذا خلقوا، فيقول الآخر: ويا ليتهم اذ لم يعلموا لماذا خلقوا، عملوا بما علموا، فيقول الآخر: ويا ليتهم اذ لم يعملوا بما علموا، تابوا مما عملوا.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

Never flash a toothy smile when you have committed shameful deeds,

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and never feel that it is safe to disobey Allah when you have performed evil.³³

لا تبدين عن واضحة وقد عملت الأعمال الفاضحة، ولا تأمنن البيات وقد عملت السيئات.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Allah has decreed absolutely that He will not bestow any blessing upon a slave, and then confiscate it from him unless the slave commits a sin, thereby making him deserving of His wrath.³⁴

إن الله قضى قضاء حتماً أن لا ينعم على العبد بنعمة فيسلبها إياه، حتى يحدث العبد ذنباً يستحق بذلك النعمة.



Nothing corrupts the heart more than sin. The heart combats the sin, and this continues until the heart is turned upside-down.³⁵

ما من شيء أفسد للقلب من خطيئة، إن القلب ليوافق الخطيئة، فما تزال به حتى تغلب عليه فيصير أعلاه أسفله.



When a slave [of Allah] commits a sin, his sustenance is taken away.³⁶

إن العبد ليدنّب الذنب فيزوي عنه الرزق.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Whenever a vein palpitates with pain or a person suffers a misfortune, headache, or sickness, it is due to committing a sin. Thus Allah, the Exalted, says in His book: 'Whatever misfortunes afflict you are due to what your hands have heard, and He pardons many of them' (42:30). Allah pardons more [sins] than He punishes for.³⁷

أما أنه ليس من عرق يضرب، ولا نكبة ولا صداع ولا مرض إلا بذنب، وذلك قول الله تعالى في كتابه: ﴿وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ﴾.



When a person commits a sin, he is deprived of being able to perform

the night prayer (*salat al-layl*). An evil deed acts faster upon its perpetrator than a knife slicing meat.³⁸

إن الرجل ليذنب فيحرم صلاة الليل، وإن العمل السيئ أسرع في صاحبه من السكين في اللحم.



Allah, the Exalted, has declared: 'The least that I do to a slave who prefers his carnal desires over obeying Me is deprive him of the pleasure of invoking Me.'³⁹

يقول الله تعالى: إن أدنى ما أصنع بالعبد إذا آثر شهوته على طاعتي أن أحرمه لذيق مناجاتي.



Whoever intends to commit a sin should not carry it out, for it is possible that the Lord – Exalted and Lofty be He – will see the slave committing the sin and say: 'By My honour, I will never forgive you after this!'⁴⁰

من هم بسيئة فلا يعملها، فإنه ربما عمل العبد السيئة فيراه الرب تبارك وتعالى، فيقول: وعزّي لا اغفر لك بعد ذلك أبداً.

Imam al-Kazim (A) said,

It is a right upon Allah that He not be disobeyed in any place which is not illuminated by sunlight to purify it.⁴¹

حق على الله أن لا يعصى في دار إلا أضحاها للشمس حتى تظهرها.

The Messenger of Allah said,

When, in his hundred years of sinning, the slave of Allah abstains from just one sin, he will glimpse his [heavenly] spouses enjoying Paradise.⁴²

إن العبد ليحبس علي ذنب من ذنوبه مائة عام، وأنه لينظر إلى أزواجه في الجنة يتنعمن.

It is narrated that the Commander of the Faithful (A) said to someone in his presence who was asking Allah for forgiveness:

REPENTANCE

May your mother be bereft of you! Do you realise what seeking forgiveness is? Seeking forgiveness is the level of the elevated ones. It is a phrase that, in reality, means six things. First, to regret what has passed. Second, to resolve never to return to that sin again. Third, to restore the rights of the created beings so that you meet Allah with no complaint against you. Fourth, to go back and fulfil every obligation that you missed and give it its rightful due. Fifth, to repair the flesh that has grown with the ill-gotten sustenance by dissolving it through sorrow, until the skin hangs from the bone and new flesh grows between them. Sixth, to make your body taste the ache of obedience just as you made it taste the sweetness of disobedience. Thereafter, you may say 'I seek forgiveness from Allah.'⁴³

تكلتك أمك أتدري، ما الاستغفار؟ إن الاستغفار درجة العليين، وهو اسم واقع على ستة معان، أولها: الندم على ما مضى. الثاني: العزم على ترك العود إليه أبداً. الثالث: أن تؤدي إلى المخلوقين حقوقهم حتى تلقى الله أملتس ليس عليك تبعه. الرابع: أن تعمد كل إلى فريضة عليك ضيعتها فتؤدي حقها. الخامس: أن تعمد إلى اللحم الذي نبت على السحت فتذيبه بالأحزان حتى يلصق الجلد بالعظم وينشأ بينهما لحم جديد. السادس: أن تذيب الجسم ألم الطاعة كما أذقته حلاوة المعصية، فعند ذلك تقول استغفر الله.



Relinquishing sin is easier than the quest for repentance. How often does a moment's carnal desire lead to lengthy sorrow! Death unmasks the world and does not allow any happiness to remain for those who have intellect.⁴⁴

ترك الخطيئة أيسر من طلب التوبة، وكم من شهوة ساعة أورثت حزناً طويلاً، والموت فضح الدنيا ولم يترك لذي لب فرحاً.

Repentance in *The Lantern of the Path*

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

Repentance is the rope of Allah and aids His compassion. The slave of Allah must repent continuously in every situation. Every grade of the servants of Allah is liable for repentance. The repentance of the

apostles is from their inner uneasiness; the repentance of the saints is from contaminated thoughts; the repentance of the pure ones is from venting frustrations; the repentance of the distinguished ones is from being preoccupied with anything other than Allah; and the repentance of the ordinary people is from sins.

Each group's form of repentance is rooted in a particular form of knowledge and recognition and ends in a specific way, as will be elucidated upon here.

When ordinary people repent, they should wash their inner selves with the water of heartbreak and confess to their wrongdoings. They should regret what has passed, fear what is to come in the remainder of their lives and not underestimate their wrongdoings lest that lead them to laziness. They should constantly weep and grieve over their lapses in obeying Allah. They should restrain themselves from their carnal desires and ask Allah to help them remain loyal to their repentance and to protect them from returning to what they had left behind. They should subjugate themselves on the battlefield of struggle and worship. They should perform the obligatory acts that they omitted and restore the rights of those they have wronged. They should avoid bad company, spend the nights awake and the days thirsty, constantly remember the punishment in the Hereafter, and seek aid from Allah. They should beg Him to keep them righteous in times of ease as well as hardship, and to be steadfast in times of ease and trial so they do not fall from the level of the penitent. For in all this lies purification from sins, an increase in good deeds, and the elevation of status. Allah says: 'And Allah will certainly know those who were truthful, and He shall certainly know the liars' (29:3).⁴⁵

التوبة حبل الله ومدد عنايته، ولا بد للعبد من مداومة التوبة على كل حال، وكل فرقة من العباد لهم توبة فتوبة الأنبياء من اضطراب السر، وتوبة الأولياء من تلوين الخطرات، وتوبة الأصفياء من التنفيس، وتوبة الخاص من الاشتغال بغير الله، وتوبة العام من الذنوب، ولكل واحد منهم معرفة وعلم في أصل التوبة، ومنتهى أمره وذلك يطول شرحه ههنا....

Notes

- ¹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 74, p. 159.
- ² Ibid., vol. 6, p. 21.
- ³ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 435.
- ⁴ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 16, p. 77.
- ⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 430.
- ⁶ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 1, p. 35.
- ⁷ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 44, p. 675.
- ⁸ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 3, p. 20.
- ⁹ A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary texts of *hadith*. However, the narration has also been mentioned by al-Naraqi in *Jami' al-Sa'adat*.
- ¹⁰ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 6, p. 19.
- ¹¹ A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary texts of *hadith*. However, the narration has also been mentioned by al-Naraqi in *Jami' al-Sa'adat*.
- ¹² See above note.
- ¹³ See above note.
- ¹⁴ A similar narration is mentioned in al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 4, p. 265.
- ¹⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 434.
- ¹⁶ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 16, p. 61.
- ¹⁷ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 7, p. 264.
- ¹⁸ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 5, p. 14.
- ¹⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 284.
- ²⁰ Ibid., p. 278.
- ²¹ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 15, p. 318.
- ²² With reference to Qur'an 19:32: 'And (Allah has made me) reverent to my mother. And He did not make me an oppressive wretch.'
- ²³ With reference to Qur'an 5:90: 'O you who believe, indeed wine, gambling, (dedication of) stones, and (divination by) arrows are an abomination of Satan's work.'
- ²⁴ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 47, p. 216.
- ²⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 288.
- ²⁶ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 15, p. 338.
- ²⁷ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 70, p. 345.
- ²⁸ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 16, p. 59.
- ²⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 287.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 428.

³¹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 66, p. 235.

³² A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary texts of *hadith*. However, the narration has also been mentioned by al-Naraqī in *Jami' al-Sa'adat*.

³³ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 12, p. 115.

³⁴ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 70, p. 334.

³⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 268.

³⁶ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 15, p. 301.

³⁷ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 269.

³⁸ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 70, p. 330.

³⁹ A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary texts of *hadith*. However, the narration has also been mentioned by al-Naraqī in *Jami' al-Sa'adat*.

⁴⁰ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 272.

⁴¹ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 15, p. 306.

⁴² al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 70, p. 331.

⁴³ Ibid., vol. 6, p. 36.

⁴⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 451.

⁴⁵ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 97.

❖ Taking the Self to Account & Supervising the Self ❖

Introduction

Allah says:

We will set up the scales of justice for the Day of Resurrection. Thus no soul shall be dealt with unjustly at all. Even if it be the measure of a mustard-seed, We shall bring it forth and We are sufficient in taking account. (21:47)

And the book will be placed (before you). You will see the sinful afraid of what is contained therein. They will say, 'Woe to us! What kind of book is this, which leaves out nothing neither small nor big without recording it? They will find what they have done presented (before them). And your Lord shall not be unjust to anyone. (18:49)

The Day that Allah shall raise them together and inform them of what they have done...Allah has counted it while they have forgotten. And Allah is a witness over all things. (58:6)

On that Day people shall come out in groups in order to see their deeds. Then whosoever has done an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whoever has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it. (99:6-8)

The Day that every soul shall find what good it has done and what evil it has done, wishing there were a great distance between him and the evil. (3:30)

And know that Allah is aware of what is within your souls, so be wary of Him. (2:235)

Among the servants of Allah, the masters of insight

realise that Allah is observing them and that they will dispute over the accounting (of deeds) and seek to reclaim even the smallest moments. They realise that nothing will save them from these dangers except accounting for the self as a necessity, sincere self-vigilance, and making the soul answerable and accountable for every breath and every movement. Anyone who accounts for his self before he is accounted for will have his accounting lightened during the Resurrection. His response will be ready for when he is questioned, and he will have a good end. But the one who does not account himself will endure lasting sorrow, will tarry lengthily on the plains of Resurrection, and will be driven to the dishonour of his sins.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

If any of you wishes to ask his Lord for anything and receive nothing but the granting of that request, he should despair of people – all of them – and hope in no one except Allah. If Allah recognises this in his heart, anything he asks will be granted. So take your selves to account before you are taken to account, for on the Resurrection there will be fifty stages, each stage lasting one thousand years – ‘the Day whose measure is fifty thousand years’ (70:4).¹

إذا أراد أحدكم أن لا يسأل ربه شيئاً إلا أعطاه، فليياس من الناس كلهم، ولا يكون له رجاء إلا من عند الله، فإذا علم الله ذلك من قلبه لم يسأله شيئاً إلا أعطاه، فحاسبوا أنفسكم قبل أن تحاسبوا عليها، فإن للقيامة خمسين موقفاً، كل موقف مقام ألف سنة ثم تلا: ﴿فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ﴾.

By connecting self-accounting with despairing of others and placing hope only in Allah, the Imam (A) is implying that people usually place their hopes in other people (instead of Allah) without even realising it; the general nature of the accounting implies the same thing. Mentioning the stations of the Resurrection after

instructing people to account for their own selves implies that these stations will be set up take people to account. So whoever takes account of his own self in this world for one day will be spared a day's worth of accounting at those stations on that Day. Allah says:

And let the soul observe what it has sent forth for tomorrow. (59:18)

It is narrated that an intelligent person should divide his time into four intervals – one of which should be spent in self-accounting.²

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

Even if there were no further terror at the accounting during the Resurrection other than being exposed before Allah, the Exalted, and being humiliated as the veil which shields concealed acts is ripped open, people [who are aware of this] would still never descend from the mountain tops [out of fear] and would not seek harbour in buildings and would neither drink nor sleep except when absolutely necessary to avoid harming themselves.

Whoever acts like this acts like someone who has seen the terrors and hardships of the Resurrection which every soul will have to endure. He acts like someone who sees, inside his heart, the stations where his soul will be taken for questioning before the Almighty. It is as if he is on the plains of Resurrection, summoned along the throngs, answerable for his deeds. Allah, the Exalted says: 'Even if it be the measure of a mustard-seed, We shall bring it forth, and We are sufficient in taking account' (21:47).³

لو لم يكن للحساب مهولة إلا حياة العرض على الله تعالى، وفضيحة هتك الستر على المخفيات، لحق للمرء أن لا يهبط من رؤوس الجبال، ولا يأوي إلى عمران ولا يشرب ولا ينام، إلا عن اضطرار متصل بالتلف، ومثل ذلك يفعل من يرى القيامة بأهوالها وشدائدها قائمة في كل نفس، ويعاين بالقلب الوقوف بين يدي الجبار، حينئذ يأخذ نفسه بالخاصة، كأنه إلى عرصاتها مدعو وفي غمراتها مسؤول، قال الله تعالى: ﴿وَإِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا وَكَفَى بِنَا حَاسِبِينَ﴾.

What is self-accounting?

'Self-accounting' means that, first, a person should require himself to perform all of the religious obligations; these are like financial capital. If he fulfils them, he should thank Allah for this and wish for more of the same. However, if the time for prayer has escaped him, then he should require himself to make up the prayers. If he has performed them deficiently, he should make up for the deficiency with the recommended prayers.

If you commit an act of disobedience, then occupy yourself with admonition, punishment, and penalisation, and do all that is required to set it right, just like a merchant would do for his business as he scrutinises his accounts in this world – every single grain and carat – and notes his profits and losses so that he is not cheated out of anything.

He should beware the deception and craftiness of his inner self, for it is deceptive, complicated, and cunning. He should first demand a proper response from it about everything that it said throughout the day. He should take his self to account for the things which someone other than himself will take to account on the plains of Resurrection. He should take himself to account for what he looked at – nay, even what he thought and imagined – where he stood, where he sat, what he ate, what he drank, when he slept, and even his silence – why he was silent – and when he did nothing, why he did nothing.

Once he becomes aware of all that is incumbent upon his soul and he estimates correctly how much of that he has fulfilled, he can count that in his favour; the rest which he has not fulfilled obviously counts against him. Therefore, he must affirm this and write it down on the

pages of his heart just as he notes what his business partner owes him in his heart or in his records.

The base self is a debtor who can pay back its debts in full. Some of them can be repaid by paying reparation and making amends, some exactly as they are due, and some by punishing it. However, none of this is possible without first taking account of it and identifying what obligations it still has to fulfil. After doing that, then the person can occupy himself with paying back his debts and making amends.

Imam al-Kazim (A) said,

Someone who does not take his self to account every day is not one of us. If he performs a good deed, he asks Allah for the opportunity to perform more good deeds; and if he sins, he seeks Allah's forgiveness and repents.⁴

ليس منا من لم يحاسب نفسه في كل يوم، فإن عمل حسنة استزاد الله، وإن عمل سيئة استغفر الله منها وتاب إليه.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Do not let people distract you from your self. For the command has come to you, regardless of them. Do not let this or that spoil your day, for the one who records your deeds is accompanying you. So do good; truly, I have never seen a higher accomplishment or a speedier quest than replacing an old sin with a fresh good deed.⁵

لا يغرنك الناس من نفسك فإن الأمر يصل إليك دوتهم، ولا يقطع همارك بكذا وكذا، فإن معك من يحفظ عليك عملك، فاحسن فإن لم أر شيئاً أحسن دركاً ولا أسرع طلباً من حسنة محدثة لذنوب قديم.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

A man came to the Messenger of Allah (S) and said to him: 'O Messenger of Allah, advise me.'

So the Prophet (S) asked him: 'If I advise you, will you follow my

advice?' The Prophet (S) asked him this three times, and each time, the man replied: 'Yes, O Messenger of Allah.'

Then the Messenger of Allah (S) told him: 'I advise you that if you intend to do something, think about its consequences. If it is rightly guided, then do it, but if it is in error, then refrain from it.'⁶

إن رجلاً أتى النبي (ص) فقال له: يا رسول الله أوصني، فقال له رسول الله (ص): فهل أنت مستوص إن أنا أوصيتك؟ حتى قال له ذلك ثلاثاً وفي كلها يقول له الرجل: نعم يا رسول الله. فقال له رسول الله (ص): فإني أوصيتك إذا أنت هممت بأمر فتدبر عاقبته، فإن يك رشداً فامضه، وإن يك غياً فانتبه عنه.

This advice is part of self-accounting; nay, it is the height of self-accounting.

Vigilance over the self

The slave of Allah should scrutinize himself with a sharp eye when diving into deeds. If he does not do this, he will overstep the bounds and become corrupted. He must be vigilant of Allah in all situations – in every movement and every moment of rest. He should recognise that Allah is aware of his innermost consciousness and mindful of his inner thoughts; He is watching over the deeds of His servants, standing over every soul and what it earns; and the secrets of the Heart are disclosed in full truth to Him just as the outer skin of a human is unveiled to people – nay, to an even greater extent. Allah says:

Does he not know that Allah sees? (96:14)

Indeed Allah is watchful over you. (4:1)

The Prophet (S) said,

Goodness is that you worship Allah as if you can see Him. If you cannot see Him, He sees you.⁷

الاحسان أن تعبد الله كأنك تراه، فإن لم تكن تراه فإنه يراك

It is said that when Zulaykha was alone with Joseph and went after him, she covered the face of her idol. Joseph asked,

What is wrong with you? You are embarrassed in front of a piece of stone that is watching you, but I should not be embarrassed in front of the Omnipotent King who is constantly watching?⁸

وحكي إن زليخا لما خلت بيوسف فقامت فغطت وجه صنماً، فقال يوسف: ما لك أتستحين من مراقبة حماد، ولا استحيي من مراقبة الملك الجبار.

A *hadith qudsi*⁹ relates:

Only those who, when they intend to disobey Me, remember My grandeur and become vigilant of Me; and those whose backs are bent in humility towards Me shall live in the eternal gardens of Eden. By My honour and majesty, I intend to punish the people of the earth, but when I see the people who are hungry and thirsty out of fear for Me, I avert my chastisement from them.¹⁰

إنما يسكن جنات عدن الذين إذا هموا بالمعاصي ذكروا عظمي فراقبوني، والذين انحنت أصلاهم من خشيتي، وعزتي وجلالي، إني لأهمم بعذاب أهل الأرض، فإذا نظرت إلى أهل الجوع والعطش من مخافتي صرفت عنهم العذاب.

If recognition [that Allah is watching] turns into certainty – meaning that there is no longer any doubt – the heart will be overwhelmed by this and seek refuge. Overpowered by awe of the Watcher, it will turn to this as its primary concern.

Those who have reached this certainty are of two levels of vigilance.

First, there is the vigilance of those who are near to Allah. This is the vigilance of glorification and reverence. It happens when the heart is drowned in witnessing that

majesty and shattered with fear. As a result, the heart does not have any room left to be watchful of anything or anyone else. This becomes its only concern, and Allah takes care of all that person's other concerns.

Second, there is the vigilance of the pious – the 'companions of the right side' (*ashab al-yamin*). They are people whose souls have triumphed, for they have become certain that Allah is aware of their outer and inner selves. However, the sight of the divine beauty and majesty has not yet astounded them; rather, their hearts remain in temperance, still having the tendency to look around at different states and deeds while shyness of Allah has overtaken them. They would not proceed towards or desist from something unless they are certain about it; they abstain from anything which would expose them during the Resurrection. Since they see Allah as being fully aware of them, they do not need to wait for the Resurrection.

The slave of Allah cannot ever avoid being in one of these three states: either he is obeying Allah, disobeying Allah, or engaging in neutral acts (*mubah*). When obeying Allah, his vigilance involves sincerity, perfection, observing proper etiquette, and guarding the deeds from any blemish. When disobeying Allah, his vigilance involves repentance, regret, desisting, shame, and trying to cover up the fault. When engaging in neutral acts, his vigilance involves observing proper etiquette, such as sitting facing the *qiblah* or sleeping on the right side.

All of that is included in self-vigilance, along with bearing witness to the one who provides blessings, being thankful for blessings, and being patient during trials. All of these have boundaries which must be observed through

constant self-vigilance. 'And whoever transcends the boundaries of Allah has indeed wronged his self' (65:1).

Notes

¹ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 7, p. 143.

² With reference to the narration from the Holy Prophet (S): 'The intellectual one should not be unable to preserve the following four hours for himself: An hour in which he invokes his Lord; an hour in which he accounts over himself; an hour in which he ponders over the actions of Allah; and one hour free for himself that he may do as he wishes lawfully.' Related in al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 16, p. 97.

³ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 85.

⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 453.

⁵ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 68, p. 244.

⁶ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 8, p. 150.

⁷ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 66, p. 203.

⁸ A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary texts of *hadith*. However, the narration has also been mentioned by al-Naraqi in *Jami' al-Sa'adat*.

⁹ Indicates the words of Allah, revealed and/or inspired, then transmitted via the Holy Prophet Muhammad or one of the thirteen infallibles from his progeny.

¹⁰ al-Suyuti, *al-Durr al-Manthur* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), vol. 5, p. 161.

❖ Contemplation & Pondering ❖

Introduction

Allah said,

They ponder upon the creation of the heavens and the earth (saying), 'O our Lord, You have not created this in vain'...Do they not ponder upon the Qur'an? Or do their hearts have locks upon them? (3:191; 47:24)

The Prophet (S) said,

An hour's contemplation is better than a year's worship.¹

تفكر ساعة خير من عبادة سنة.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

Contemplation prompts one towards goodness and acting upon it.²

التفكر يدعو إلى البر والعمل به.



Awaken your heart through contemplation, vacate your beds at night [to worship], and beware of Allah, your Lord.³

نبه بالتفكر قلبك وجاف عن الليل جنبك واتق الله ربك.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

The best worship is copious contemplation on Allah and His power.⁴

أفضل العبادة إدمان التفكير في الله وفي قدرته.

Contemplation on Allah here is not referring to contemplation on His essence. That is forbidden since it leads to confusion and bewilderment and throws the intellect into chaos. Rather, it means observing His actions, the marvels of His work, and the wonders of His command in Creation, for these point to His majesty, greatness, holiness, and exaltedness; they also point to the perfection of His knowledge and wisdom, the enforceability of His will and power, and that He surrounds all things.

Such is the contemplation of the 'people of intellect'. Allah says:

Indeed in the creation of the heavens and earth, and the variation of night and day, there are signs for the people of intellect; those who remember Allah standing, sitting and on their sides, pondering upon the creation of the heavens and the earth (saying), 'O our Lord, You have not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Save us from the Hellfire.' (3:190-191)

Allah says 'and from His signs' in many places [in the Qur'an]. Thus, these verses are the channels for contemplation on Allah and His power – but not His essence, glory be to Him – for those who have knowledge.

A famous narration from the Prophet (S) says,

Contemplate on the generous favours of Allah, but do not contemplate on Allah, for you cannot fathom His magnitude.⁵

تفكروا في آلاء الله ولا تفكروا في الله، فإنكم لن تقدروا قدره.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

Beware of contemplation upon Allah. However, if you wish to see His grandeur, then look upon the greatness of His creation.⁶

إياكم والتفكر في الله، ولكن إذا أردتم أن تنظروا إلى عظمته فانظروا إلى عظيم خلقه.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

When someone looks at Allah, how he is destroyed!⁷

من نظر في الله كيف هو هلك.

Contemplation that 'prompts one towards goodness and acting upon it'⁸ is more general than this and includes contemplation on good deeds and sins. For if the slave of Allah reflects on his good deeds – are they complete or deficient? do they agree with or contradict the Sunnah? are they free from polytheism and doubt, or mingled with them? – this type of contemplation will doubtlessly prompt him to reform his deeds and rectify any defects in them.

Similarly, if he contemplates on his sins and their consequences – such as punishment or being distanced from Allah – this would prompt him to stop sinning and rectify what he has done through repentance and regret.

If someone contemplates on Allah's attributes, actions, grace, and goodness towards His servants – through His abundant blessings and vast gifts; through His only charging them with that which is beneath their level of endurance; through His promise of an ample reward in exchange for a few deeds; through His putting all in the heavens and in the earth (and what lies between them) in their service; and other things – that will undoubtedly inspire him 'towards goodness and acting upon it', towards aspiring to obey Allah and ceasing to disobey.

This is the contemplation of average people, as is indicated in the words of Imam al-Rida (A):

Worship is not abundant prayer and fasting. Rather, worship is contemplation upon the command of Allah.⁹

ليس العبادة كثرة الصلاة والصوم، إنما العبادة التفكير في أمر الله.

Imam al-Sadiq was once asked about a narration that the people were relating; namely, 'an hour's contemplation is better than standing for a night (in worship).' He was asked,

'How should we contemplate?'

He replied, 'Pass by ruins or a deserted dwelling and say: "Where are your inhabitants? Where are those who constructed you? What is wrong with you that you do not reply?"'¹⁰

سئل الصادق (ع) عما يروي الناس أن تفكر ساعة خير من قيام ليلة كيف تفكر؟ قال: تمر بالخربة مرة أو بالدار فتقول: أين ساكنوك؟ أين بانوك؟ ما لك لا تتكلمين.

This type of contemplation – which was mentioned in the first prophetic narration and which has been explained – has less merit than the first two types of contemplation. The prophetic narration is more general than this, and Imam al-Sadiq (A) explained it according to the capacity of those he was speaking to. For everyone contemplates according to his own understanding and level. We have mentioned some methods of contemplation in our book called *Ilm al-Yaqin (Certain Knowledge)*, and whoever wishes to can refer to it.

Contemplation in *The Lantern of the Path*

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

Take a lesson from what has passed of this world. Does it spare anyone? Does anyone remain? Noble or lowly, rich or poor, friend or foe? What has passed does not return, like flowing water.

The Messenger of Allah (S) said, 'Death is a sufficient admonisher, and a sufficient proof for the intellect. It increases consciousness of Allah, makes people busy in worship, brings intimacy with Allah, and

is explained in the Qur'an.'

He also said, 'Nothing remains of this world except trial and tribulation. Anyone who is saved is only saved through sincerely seeking recourse [in Allah].'

Prophet Noah said, 'I found this world to be like a house with two doors. I entered through one of them and left through the other.'

If this is the state of one whom Allah has purified, then what about the person who is peacefully resting in this world, relying upon it, wasting away his life in building it, and abandoning his faith in pursuing it?

But thinking is a mirror for good deeds. It absolves sins, illuminates hearts, inspires open-handedness to people, and is an aid in mending the Hereafter by being aware of the end results and seeking to gain knowledge. There is no trait like this through which Allah is worshipped.

The Messenger of Allah said, 'An hour's contemplation is better than a year's worship.'

No one shall reach the station of contemplation unless Allah distinguishes him with the light of monotheism and inner knowledge of Allah.¹¹

اعتبروا بما مضى من الدنيا، هل بقي على احد؟ أو هل فيها باق من الشريف والوضيع والغني والفقير والولي والعدو؟ فكذلك ما لم يأت منها بما مضى اشبه من الماء بالماء.

وقال رسول الله (ص): كفى بالموت واعظا وبالعقل دليلا، وبالتقوى زادا، وبالعبادة شغلا، وباللله مؤنسا وبالقرآن بيانا.

قال (ص): لم يبق من الدنيا إلا بلاء وفتنة وما نجا من نجا إلا بصدق الالتجاء.

وقال نوح (ع): وجدت الدنيا كبيت له بابان دخلت من أحدهما وخرجت من الآخر. هذا حال صافي الله، فكيف حال من اطمأن فيها وركن اليها، وأضاع عمره في عمارتها وفرق دينه في طلبها، والفكرة مرآة الحسنات وكفارة السيئات وضيء القلوب وفسحة للخلق، وإصابة في صلاح المعاد وإطلاع على العواقب واستزادة في العلم، وهي خصلة لا يعبد الله بمثلها قال رسول الله (ص): فكرة

ساعة خير من عبادة سنة، ولا ينال منزلة التفكير إلا من خصّه الله بنور التوحيد والمعرفة.

The heart

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

O son of Adam, if a bird ate your heart, it would not feel full; and if the point of a needle were placed on your eye, it would cover it up. Yet, with these two, you want to understand the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth? If you are sincere, then here is the sun – only one of the creations of Allah. If you can, fill your eyes with it, and it will be as you say.¹²

ابن آدم لو اكل قلبك طائر لم يشبعه، وبصرك لو وضع عليه خرق ابرة لغطاه، تريد أن تعرف بملا ملكوت السماوات والأرض؟ إن كنت صادقاً فهذه الشمس، خلق من خلق الله، فإن قدرت أن تملأ عينك منها فهو كما تقول.

By 'heart', he meant the physical heart – the one with glands – which could be eaten. Obviously, neither the physical heart nor the physical eye can know the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth. Since the heart and eye belong to the physical realm, how can they see the celestial kingdom? These words were addressed to people who had not gone beyond the tangible and material, whom the Word of Allah refers to:

They have hearts which do not comprehend.
(7:179)

But those who have passed them by and reached the level of the intellect and what is understood have celestial hearts, as indicated in His Word:

Indeed, therein is a reminder for whoever has a heart. (50:37)

With their hearts, they come to know the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth, for their hearts are from the celestial realm. Thus, Allah encourages observation of the

heavenly kingdoms in more than one place in His book.

He, the Exalted, says:

Do they not observe anything in the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth and that which Allah has created? Or perhaps their moment of death has drawn close? In what message, after this, will they then believe? (7:185)

So did We show Abraham the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth, so that he may be of the certain ones. (6:75)

There are many other such verses.

Truly, the essence of Allah cannot be fathomed by the heart, just as it cannot be discerned by the eye. Rather, using the heart, it is only possible to become aware of some aspects of His magnificence.

Notes

- ¹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 6, p. 133.
- ² al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 55.
- ³ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 67, p. 318.
- ⁴ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 15, p. 196.
- ⁵ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 3, p. 106.
- ⁶ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 93.
- ⁷ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 3, p. 264.
- ⁸ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 55.
- ⁹ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 15, p. 196.
- ¹⁰ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 53.
- ¹¹ al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 113.
- ¹² al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 93.

Remembrance of Death **& Limiting Hopes**

Introduction

Allah said:

Every soul shall taste death. And you shall only be recompensed with your remuneration on the Day of Resurrection. The one who is set aside from the Hellfire and is admitted into Paradise has succeeded. And the worldly life is nothing but the wares of delusion. (3:185)

The Prophet (S) said,

‘Increase your remembrance of the destroyer of pleasures’

It was asked, ‘What is that, O Messenger of Allah?’

He replied, ‘Death. No slave of Allah can bear it in mind, in its full reality, without the world constricting around him – if he is in comfort. Nor can he remember it while in distress without feeling relieved.’¹

اكثرُوا ذكرَ هادمِ اللذاتِ، قيل: وما هو يا رسول الله؟ قال: الموت، فما ذكره عبد على الحقيقة في سعة إلا ضاقت عليه الدنيا، وفي شدة إلا اتسعت عليه.

He said,

Death is a penance for every Muslim.² الموت كفارة لكل مسلم.



The embellishment of the believer is death.³ تحفة المؤمن الموت.



Death, O death! Alas, there is no escape from death. Death brings with it whatever is inside. For the people of the eternal abode – those who strove for it and desired it – it brings relief, comfort, and a blessed return to the lofty heavens.⁴

الموت الموت، ألا ولابد من الموت، جاء الموت بما فيه، جاء بالروح والراحة والكرّة المباركة، إلى جنة عالية لأهل دار الخلود الذين كان لها سعيهم وفيها رغبتهم.



If you deserve the guardianship of Allah and bliss, your end will come before your eyes, and your hopes will retreat behind your back. But if you deserve the guardianship of Satan and wretchedness, far-fetched expectations will come before your eyes, and death will retreat behind your back.⁵

إذا استحققت ولاية الله والسعادة جاء الأجل بين العينين وذهب الأمل وراء الظهر، وإذا استحققت ولاية الشيطان والشقاوة جاء الأمل بين العينين وذهب الأجل وراء الظهر.

He was asked:

‘Who is the wisest of the believers?’

He replied: ‘The one who remembers death the most and is most serious in preparing for it.’⁶

وسئل أي المؤمنين أكيس؟ فقال: أكثرهم ذكراً للموت وأشدّهم له استعداداً.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

Death descends quite rightfully upon the one who assumes tomorrow will be part of his lifespan.⁷

ما أنزل الموت حق منزلته من عدّة غدّاً من أجله.



A slave of Allah never lengthens his hopes without impairing his deeds.⁸

ما أطال عبد الأمل إلا أساء العمل.



Had the slave of Allah seen his death and how quickly it approaches, he would have detested working in pursuit of this world.⁹

لو رأى العبد أجله وسرعته إليه، لأبغض العمل من طلب الدنيا.

Someone once said to Imam al-Baqir (A),

‘Tell me something which I shall benefit from.’

He replied, ‘Remember death abundantly, for no one remembers it abundantly without abstaining from the world.’¹⁰

قيل للباقر (ع): حدثني ما انتفع به. قال: أكثر ذكر الموت، فإنه لم يكتر ذكره إنسان إلا زهد في الدنيا.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

‘Whenever you carry a bier, be as if you are the one being carried – as if you were begging your Lord to return you to this world. Think – if He granted that to you, what would you do afresh?’

Then he said, ‘How strange. A people whose ancestors have been taken away from them will also be called to depart, but they dally. Allah did not create like death. It is a certainty in which there is no doubt, and yet it looks like a doubtful thing in which there is no certainty’¹¹

إذا أنت حملت جنازة فكن كأنك المحمول وكأنك سألت ربك الرجوع إلى الدنيا ففعل، فانظر ماذا تستأنف، ثم قال: عجباً لقوم حبس أولهم عن آخرهم، ثم نوذي فيهم بالرحيل وهم يلعبون، وقال (ع): ما خلق الله يقيناً لا شك فيه أشبه بشك لا يقين فيه من الموت.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

Remembering death kills off the carnal desires in the soul. It plucks out the roots of negligence and strengthens the heart for the appointment with Allah. It softens one’s nature, breaks the banners of whims, extinguishes the fire of greed, and burns desire for the world. This is the meaning behind what the Prophet (S) said, ‘An hour’s contemplation is better than a year’s worship.’ That is, when a

person's exaggerated view of the world is dissolved, he strives harder for the Hereafter.

This is the meaning behind the Prophet (S) saying: 'An hour's pondering is superior to a year's worship.' That is, when the tentropes of this world are untied, and he strives harder for the Hereafter.

Never doubt that mercy descends upon the person who remembers death – because of him doing this. Whoever does not take a lesson from death – while he has no escape from it and is completely powerless – will remain in the grave for a long time and will be bewildered at the Resurrection; there is no good in him. The Prophet (S) said, 'Increase your remembrance of the destroyer of pleasures...' ¹²

ذكر الموت يميت الشهوات في النفس، ويقلع منابت الغفلة ويقوي القلب بمواعيد الله، ويرق الطبع ويكسر أعلام الهوى، ويطفئ نار الحرص ويحقر الدنيا. وهو معنى ما قال النبي (ص): فكر ساعة خير من عبادة سنة، وذلك عندما يحل أطنايب خيام الدنيا ويشدها في الآخرة، ولا يشك بنزول الرحمة على ذاكر الموت بهذه الصفة، ومن لا يعتبر بالموت، وقلة حيلته، وكثرة عجزه، وطول مقامه في القبر، وتحير في القيامة فلا خير فيه، وقال النبي (ص): أكثروا ذكر هادم اللذات...

Then he mentioned the rest of the narration, as mentioned above, and continued,

Death is the first station of the Hereafter and the last station of the world. Fortunate is he who is welcomed when he reaches the first station of the Hereafter, and fortunate is he who is treated well in his funeral procession at the last station of this world! Death is the nearest thing to the children of Adam, although they reckon it to be far. How man oppresses himself! What a weak creation he is! In death lies the salvation of the sincere and the destruction of the sinners. For that reason, those who long for it do so, and those who abhor it do so. The Prophet (S) said, 'Allah loves meeting whoever loves to meet him; and Allah detests meeting whoever detests meeting Him.' ¹³

قال (ع): والموت أول منزل من منازل الآخرة، وآخر منزل من منازل الدنيا، فطوبى لمن أكرم عند النزول بأولها، وطوبى لمن أحسن مشايعته في آخرها، والموت أقرب الأشياء من بني آدم، وهو يعدّه أبعد، فما أجراً الإنسان على نفسه، وما اضعفه من خلق، وفي الموت نجاة المخلصين وهلاك

الجرمين، ولذلك اشتاق من اشتاق إلى الموت وكره من كره، قال النبي (ص): من أحب لقاء الله أحب الله لقاءه، ومن كره لقاء الله كره الله لقاءه.

The three groups of people

Know that people are either absorbed in this world, taken by its illusions and fancying its appetites; or they are beginning to repent; or they recognise His grace.

1. Those who are absorbed in this world do not remember death. If they remember it, it is because they are deploring their circumstances in this world. They busy themselves in disparaging death and escaping it. They are the ones about whom Allah says: 'Say: "Death, from which you try to escape, shall catch you. Then you shall be returned to the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed; He shall inform you of what you used to do"' (62:8).

This way of remembering death only distances them farther from Allah – unless they benefit from it by developing disaffection for this world, whereby its comforts are spoiled for them, and its pleasures muddled.

2. Those who repent remember death abundantly to instil fear and awe in their hearts so as to complete their repentance. They may shrink away from death out of fear that it might seize them before they have completed their repentance and made the necessary preparations. Their abhorrence of death is excused. They are not among those about it was said 'and Allah detests meeting whoever detests meeting Him',¹⁴ for they do not actually detest death or meeting Allah. Rather, they fear they will lose the opportunity to

meet Him [instead of being sent away from Him in the Hereafter] due to their failures and shortcomings. They are like a person who delays meeting his beloved because he is busy preparing for the meeting in order to please his beloved; it cannot be said that this person abhors the meeting. The symptom of those who are in this group is that they are always preparing and have no other concern. Otherwise, if they do not show that symptom, then the truth is that they are really in the category of those who are absorbed in this world.

3. Those who recognise Him remember death continuously, for it is their appointment to meet their beloved, and the lover never forgets his appointment to meet his beloved. Often, they feel that death is slow in arriving. They yearn for death to free them from the abode of the disobedient and to carry them near to the Lord of the Worlds.

Even higher than that are those who entrust the entire affair to Allah, preferring neither death nor life for themselves. Instead, they love best whatever their Master loves best. Their love and devotion brings them to the level of satisfaction with the divine (*rida*) and submission (*taslim*).

Remembrance of death

Know that death is terrifying and tremendously perilous. People are oblivious to it because they do not think about or remind themselves of it. When they remember it, they do not remember it with an unoccupied heart, but rather with a heart preoccupied with the carnal pleasures of the world, and so remembering death does not have any

effect on their hearts.

The rightful course is for the slave of Allah to empty his heart of everything but the remembrance of death, which lies imminently before him – just like a person about to travel into the perilous wilderness or embark upon the ocean; he would not think about anything else. If his heart practices remembrance of death, it will quickly affect his heart, reducing his delight and delectation with the world, and his heart would break.

The truest path to do this is to abundantly remember one's peers who have passed away. Remember their deaths, and their corpses beneath the ground. Remember their physical forms, the posts they used to hold, and the conditions of their lives – and how their body parts are now spread across the graves, their wives widowed, their children orphaned, their wealth lost, and how the mosques and gatherings are now empty of them. All trace of them has vanished, and their homes are desolate.

When he remembers one person after another, in his heart, he will separate out the conditions of each of their lives. He will remember how that person lived and the details of his face. He will remember his energetic manner; his going and coming; his longwinded hopes in life and perpetuity; his negligence of death; his self-deception that means would always be in his favour; his confidence in his strength and youthfulness; his inclination towards laughter and merrymaking while he would oblivious of the imminent death and fast-approaching doom that was lying before him; how he used to hesitate before acting, while now his feet and joints have collapsed; how he used to talk, while now worms have eaten his tongue; how he used to laugh,

while now the dust has eaten away his teeth; how he would plan ahead how much wealth he would need for the next ten years, while all that was lying between himself and death was a mere month. He was oblivious to what was desired from him until death came to him at a time that he did not expect it. The image of the angel of death was disclosed to him, and his call rang out in his ears – either towards Paradise, or towards the Fire.

At that point, he should look at himself as if he is one of them and is oblivious like they were. Fortunate is he who takes lessons from others! Along with thinking these thoughts, he should visit the graveyards and attend the sick to revive the remembrance of death in his heart, until it overwhelms him so much that death is constantly before his eyes.

Then, that person will be on the brink of withdrawing from the abode of delusion. If not, such remembrance of death – on the mere surface of the heart and tip of the tongue – will be of little use as an admonition or a warning. Whenever his heart is delighted with something worldly, he should remember – at that very moment – that he will inevitably be separated from it.

Limiting hopes

With regards to limiting one's ambitious hopes, the Prophet (S) said,

When you awake in the morning, do not speak with yourself about the evening; and when evening comes, do not speak with yourself about the morning. Take from this world for your Hereafter; and from your life for your death; and from your health for your time of illness, for you do not know what will be taken away on the morrow.¹⁵

إذا أصبحت فلا تحدث نفسك بالمساء، وإذا أمسيت فلا تحدث نفسك بالصباح، وخذ من دنياك لاخرتك ومن حياتك لموتك ومن صحتك لسقمك، فإنك لا تدري ما اسمك غداً.

The Prophet (S) also said,

The most serious things that I fear for you are two traits: following whims and entertaining farfetched hopes. Following whims deviates a person from the truth, and farfetched hopes make a person love this world.¹⁶

إن أشد ما أخاف عليكم خصلتان، اتباع الهوى وطول الأمل، فأما اتباع الهوى فإنه يعدل عن الحق، وأما طول الأمل فإنه يحجب الدنيا.

He then said,

Allah grants this world to whoever He loves as well as whoever He detests. If Allah loves a slave, He will grant him faith. Indeed, religion has its children, and the world has its children. Be of the children of religion, and do not be of the children of the world. Indeed, this world has passed by, and the Hereafter is approaching. Today, you act, but there is no accounting; soon will come a time when you are called to account but cannot act.¹⁷

إن الله تعالى يعطي الدنيا من يحب ومن يبغض، وإذا أحب عبداً أعطاه الإيمان، ألا إن للدين أبناءاً وللدنيا أبناءاً، فكونوا من أبناء الدين ولا تكونوا من أبناء الدنيا، ألا إن الدنيا قد ارتحلت مولية والآخره قد ارتحلت مقبله، ألا وإنكم في يوم عمل ليس فيه حساب، ألا وإنكم توشكون أن تكونوا في يوم حساب وليس فيه عمل.

It is reported that, one evening, he was among the people and said,

‘O people, are you not ashamed in front of Allah, the Exalted?’

They asked, ‘About what, O Messenger of Allah?’

He said, ‘You gather what you will not consume, you hope for what you will not attain, and you build what you will not inhabit.’¹⁸

روي أنه (ص) قد اطلع ذات عشية إلى الناس فقال: أيها الناس أما تستحيون من الله تعالى؟ قالوا:

وما ذاك يا رسول الله؟ فقال: تجمعون ما لا تأكلون، وتأملون ما لا تدركون، وتبنون ما لا تسكنون.

It is been narrated that Usamah ibn Zayd bought something from Zayd ibn Thabit for one hundred dinars to be paid a month later. The Prophet (S) said,

'Do you not wonder at Usamah? He has bought and deferred payment for a month. Indeed, Usamah has farfetched hopes. I swear by He in whose hands is my soul, my eyes have never blinked without me thinking that, when they closed, Allah might take back my soul before they opened again. I have never lifted any limb without thinking that I might put it down for the last time. Nor have I eaten a single morsel of food without thinking that I might choke on it.'

Then he said, 'O children of Adam, if you are intelligent, then consider yourselves as being among the dead. By He in whose hand is my soul, "What you are promised will surely come, and you will not be able to thwart it" (6:134).¹⁹

روي أن اسامة بن زيد اشترى من زيد بن ثابت وليدة بمائة دينار إلى شهر، فقال النبي (ص): ألا تعجبون من اسامة المشتري إلى شهر، إن اسامة لطويل الأمل، والذي نفسي بيده ما طرفت عيناى إلّا ظننت أن شفري لا يلتقيان حتى يقبض الله روحي، ولا رفعت طرفي فظننت أني واضعه حتى اقبض، ولا لقمتم لقمة الا ظننت أني لا اسيغها حتى اغص بها من الموت، ثم قال: يا بني آدم إن كنتم تعقلون فعدّوا أنفسكم من الموتى والذي نفسي بيده، إن ما توعدون لآت وما أنتم بمعجزين.

The causes of farfetched hopes

Know that farfetched hopes are caused by two things: ignorance and love of this world. Love of this world is such that if one becomes intimate with it, its carnal desires, its pleasures, and its bonds, then it becomes extremely difficult for the heart to detach from it. Hence, the heart abstains from remembrance of death, which

would cause this detachment.

People push away whatever they hate. However, people are madly in love with false aspirations. Their souls aspire to whatever resonates with their desires, and perpetual life in this world resonates with their desires. Hence, they never cease imagining they will live forever, and they plan what they will need for their everlasting life – be it wealth, family, a home, friends, livestock, or other worldly goods – until their hearts become devoted to and trapped in these thoughts. They fritter away their attention from the remembrance of death and do not suspect that it is near.

If some aspect of death or the need to prepare for it ever enters someone's thoughts, he pushes aside this thought: 'You have many days ahead. When you get older, repent.' But when he gets older, he says, 'Wait until you become an old man.' Then when he becomes an old man, he says, 'Wait until you finish building this house – until you finish constructing this village – until you return from this journey – until you have arranged for your son's marriage – until you have prepared a house for your son – or until you deal with this foe who insults you once and for all.'

He continues to put off remembrance of death. Any task he embarks on requires several more to complete it. Gradually, he delays day after day as task after task – numerous tasks – occupy him, until death seizes him when he least expects it, and his regret is what endures.

Most of the people in the Hellfire will cry out, 'Alas, what grief our delay has caused us!' The poor person does not realize that the one urging him to put off preparing for death today will be with him tomorrow. As time

passes, this becomes stronger and rooted deeper. This person imagined he would remain plunged in the world forever. He preserved it diligently and never took time away from it. Nay, no one will ever be free from it unless he flings it away.

Wishes ne'er to be attained in this world never end

For people's wishes reach no end but the final end

The root of all of these aspirations is love of this world, intimacy with it and negligence of the narration that says, Love whatever you want, but you shall be separated from it.²⁰

أحب ما أحببت فإنك مفارقة.

Ignorance is when a person places his confidence in his youthfulness and regards death as far, though it be near. The poor person does not think about those who reached a ripe old age in his town. Were he to count them, he would find they are less than a tenth of the townspeople. They are few because death comes quicker to the youth. For every elderly person who dies, thousands of children and youth pass on.

Since his health is good, he considers sudden death to be unlikely. But he does not realise that it is not so improbable. Even if sudden death is improbable, sudden illness is not improbable. Indeed, the onset of every illness is sudden. And after he has fallen ill, death is no longer an improbability.

Had this negligent person pondered and realised that death comes at no set time – not specifically in the time of youth, maturity, or old age; not specifically in the summer, winter, or autumn; and not specifically at night or during the day – he would have recognised the importance of preparing for it and being sensitive to it.

But ignorance of these matters and love of this world led him to indulge in lengthy aspirations and to be negligent of planning for imminent death.

He never sees death before him. He never thinks it will descend upon him. He walks in other people's funeral processions, never thinking that that one day it will be his. For he is accustomed to death. He has followed in these processions often and seen others die. But he has not familiarised himself with his own death or imagining his own death. When it strikes him, however, that it is it – it will not strike him again after that, for it is his one and only death.

When you realise that these farfetched hopes are caused by ignorance and love of this world, then the cure is to repel its causes.

1. Ignorance is driven away with clear thought from an attentive heart, and by listening to eloquent wisdom from pure hearts.
2. The remedy for love of this world lies in arduously extracting it from the heart. Love of this world is a chronic malady whose remedy has exhausted people past and present. There is no remedy for it but faith in the Hereafter – in its severe punishment and abundant reward. Love of this world will depart from the heart to the degree that a person has certainty in the Hereafter, for love of the significant eliminates love of the insignificant. When a person sees the vileness of this world and the value of the Hereafter, he will no longer look entirely at this world. How could he, when every slave of Allah has but a dingy, meagre share of this world? How could he delight in it? How could love of this world root itself in his heart when he has

faith in the Hereafter?

We ask Allah to show us this world the way His righteous servants see it.

Notes

- ¹ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 2, p. 436.
- ² al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 30, p. 416.
- ³ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 15, p. 546.
- ⁴ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 3, p. 257.
- ⁵ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 3, p. 258.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 258.
- ⁷ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 2, p. 437.
- ⁸ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 3, p. 259.
- ⁹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 70, p. 166.
- ¹⁰ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 3, p. 255.
- ¹¹ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 3, p. 229.
- ¹² al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 171.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 172.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 74, p. 75.
- ¹⁶ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 336.
- ¹⁷ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 74, p. 188.
- ¹⁸ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 15, p. 857.
- ¹⁹ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 70, p. 166.
- ²⁰ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 8, p. 155.

❖ Brotherhood & Affection ❖

Introduction

Allah says in His gracious exposition: 'Had you exhausted all that is in the earth, you could not have placed affection between their hearts, but Allah placed affection between them...Thus, by His benefaction, you became brothers' (8:63; 3:103) – meaning with affection.

Thereafter He censured and rebuked division, saying: 'Cling to the rope of Allah together and do not disunite...do not be like those who disunited and became disparate' (3:103; 3:105).

The Holy Prophet (S) said,

Those of you who will sit nearest to me on the Day of Resurrection will be the ones with the best etiquette. They shall be strolling in the shade – those people who get along with and reconcile with each other.¹

أقربكم مني مجلساً يوم القيامة أحسنكم أخلاقاً، الموطنون أكثافاً، الذين يالفون ويؤلفون.



The believer is friendly and is easy to befriend. There is no good in befriending someone who is not friendly and is not easy to befriend.²

المؤمن آلف مألوف، ولا خير فيمن لا يالف ولا يؤلف.

He also said in praise of brotherhood in religion,

Whenever Allah wishes well for a person, He grants him a righteous friend. If he forgets something, his friend will remind him; and if he is mindful, his friend will support him.³

من أراد الله به خيراً رزقه خليلاً صالحاً، إن نسي ذكره وإن ذكره أعانه.



Whenever someone gains a brother for the sake of Allah, Allah will raise that person to a level in Paradise that cannot be reached by any other deed.⁴

من آخى أحاً في الله رفع الله له درجة في الجنة، لا ينالها بشيء من عمله.



Allah, the Exalted, says: "Those who visit each other for My sake merit My love. Those who help each other for My sake merit My love. Those who love each other for My sake merit My Love. Those who give generously to each other for My sake merit My love."⁵

إن الله تعالى يقول: حقت محبتي للذين يتزاورون من أجلي، وحقت محبتي للذين يتناصرون من أجلي، وحقت محبتي للذين يتحابون من أجلي، وحقت محبتي للذين يتباذلون من أجلي



Do not hate one another, do not envy one another, and do not oppose each other. Be slaves of Allah as brothers, and it is not permissible for a Muslim to abandon his brother for more than three [days].⁶

لا تبغضوا ولا تحاسدوا ولا تدابروا وكونوا عباد الله إخواناً، ولا يحل لمسلم أن يهجر أخاه فوق ثلاث.



The believers are gentle and tender like a tame camel: if it is tied it yields, and if it is made to kneel, it kneels.⁷

المؤمنون هينون لينون كالجمال الالف، إن قيد انقاد، وإن انيخ على صخرة استناخ.

The Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

The most incapable of people is he who cannot acquire brothers;

more incapable than him is the one who loses them after attaining them.⁸

اعجز الناس من عجز عن اكتساب الاخوان، واعجز منه من ضيع من ظفر به.

The Holy Prophet (S) said,

The firmest handle of faith is love and hate for the sake of Allah – befriending the friends of Allah and disassociating from the enemies of Allah.⁹

اوثق عرى الايمان الحب في الله والبغض في الله، والتولي لاولياء الله، والتبري عن اعداء الله.

Imam al-Sajjad (A) said,

When Allah gathers all people, from the first to the last, a caller will stand and cry out as the people listen: 'Where are those who love each other for the sake of Allah?' A group will stand, and it will be said to them: 'Go forth to Paradise without any reckoning.'

The angels will meet them and ask, 'Where are you going?'

They will reply, 'To Paradise without any reckoning.'

The angels will ask, 'What group of people were you?'

They will say, 'We are those who love each other for the sake of Allah.'

The angels will ask, 'What deeds did you do?'

They will reply, 'We loved and hated for the sake of Allah.'

Hence the angels will say, 'How excellent is the reward of those who have performed good!'¹⁰

قال السجاد (ع): إذا جمع الله الاولين والآخرين قام مناد فنادى يسمع الناس، فيقول: أين المتحابون في الله؟ قال: فيقوم عنق من الناس فيقال لهم: اذهبوا إلى الجنة بغير حساب، قال: فتلقاهم الملائكة فيقولون: إلى أين؟ فيقولون: إلى الجنة بغير حساب، قال: فيقولون: فأين حزب أنتم من الناس؟ فيقولون: نحن المتحابون في الله، قال: فيقولون: وأي شئ كانت أعمالكم؟ قالوا: كنا نحب في الله ونبغض في الله، قال: فيقولون: نعم أجر العاملين.

Imam al-Baqir (A) said,

If you want to know whether you have goodness within you, observe your heart. If you love those who obey Allah and hate those who disobey Him, then you have goodness within you and Allah loves you. But if you hate those who obey Allah and love those who disobey Him, then you are void of goodness, and Allah also detests you. A person is with whoever he loves.¹¹

إذا أردت أن تعلم أن فيك خيراً فانظر إلى قلبك، فإن كان يحب أهل طاعة الله، ويبغض أهل معصيته، فففيك خير والله يحبك، وإذا كان يبغض أهل طاعة الله، ويحب أهل معصيته فليس فيك خير، والله يبغضك والمرء مع من أحب.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Whenever two believers meet, the better of them is the one who has stronger love for his brother.¹²

ما التقى مؤمنان قط إلا كان أحدهما أشدهما حباً لأخيه.



Whoever does not love and hate for the sake of the religion has no religion.¹³

كل من لم يحب في الدين ولم يبغض على الدين فلا دين له.

Companionship

Know that love and hate for the sake of Allah is a mysterious matter. The veil over it can be lifted by realising that companionship has two categories: coincidental and voluntary. People are companions coincidentally when they are neighbours or classmates, or when they meet at the market, on a journey,* at government offices, and so forth. People are companions voluntarily when they seek to be brothers for the sake of religion. There is no divine reward to entice people to perform involuntary deeds [because they are already compelled to do them].

As an expression, 'companionship' refers to sitting together, interacting, and closeness. A person would never seek companionship with someone he did not have love for. In fact, he would avoid, separate from, and try *not* to interact with someone he had no love for.

A person is loved either for his own sake or because he is the means to a higher goal, another beloved. This goal could pertain to this world and its pleasures, or it could pertain to the Hereafter. If it pertains to Allah, then this companionship can be divided into four categories.

1. The first category is when you love someone for his own sake. It is possible that he himself is beloved to you; you take delight in seeing him, spending time with him, and observing his manners due to your admiration for him. For every beautiful thing is a source of delight to the one who beholds its beauty, and every delightful thing is beloved. Delight is followed by admiration; and admiration is followed by affinity, harmony, and agreeability with one's nature. What you like about that person can either be external – such as a pleasing feature – or internal, such as a perfected intellect or good manners – and good manners are always followed by good deeds, while a perfected intellect is always accompanied by abundant knowledge. A sound nature and an upright intellect enjoy these things. Everything regarded as good brings delight and is beloved.

When hearts unite, however, that is even more mysterious, because sometimes two people have affection for each other without any regard to a handsome feature or a handsome trait. Rather, an internal attraction causes affection and harmony, for

birds of a feather flock together. People's inner resemblances are hidden. They have subtle, intricate causes; people cannot recognise them.

It is with regards to this that the Messenger of Allah (S) said,

'The spirits are mobilised troops. When they get acquainted with one another, they become harmonious; and when they disregard each other, they become incongruous'.¹⁴

الارواح جنود مجندة، فما تعارف منها ائتلف، وما تناكر منها اختلف.

Hence, mutual disrespect results from differences, and mutual affection results from sameness, which he has referred to as 'being acquainted'.

Affection for the sake of physical beauty is also included within this category as long as the intention is not to sate the carnal desire. For a beautiful appearance is delightful in and of itself, although it is the root of the lower desires. For instance, people enjoy looking at fruit, colours, flowers, rouge-tinged apples, water, and greenery – with no goal but to gaze upon them. This type of fondness is not part of love for the sake of Allah since it is merely love of nature, a love which emerges from the lower aspect of the carnal self. A person who does not believe in Allah can also have this type of love. Moreover, if it is in parallel with an abominable objective, it becomes disparaged; if not, then, at best, it is licit – neither commended nor censured.

2. The second category is when someone loves something not for its own sake but because it is a way to acquire another beloved. The means to the beloved is beloved. For this reason, man loves gold and silver

since they are means to other goals. He may love a sultan who he benefits from, or he may love that sultan's dignitaries because they can better his condition and bring his concerns to the sultan's heart. If the ultimate goal is worldly, then this type of love does not fall under the umbrella of love for the sake of Allah, and it is either abominable or allowable.

3. The third category is when you love someone not for his own sake but for the sake of someone (or something) else. The love of that latter person is not for the sake of prosperity in this world but rather in the Hereafter

This is a matter which is obvious and not mysterious. For instance, someone might love his teacher or *shaykh* because he helps him acquire knowledge and improve his conduct, and his ultimate goal is to achieve success in the Hereafter through his knowledge and actions. This does fall under the umbrella of love for the sake of Allah.

Similarly, a teacher may love a student who appropriates his knowledge. Through this student, the teacher reaches the rank of teaching and ascends to a venerated level in the celestial realm. Jesus (A) said, 'Whoever learns, acts according to his knowledge, and then teaches what he knows will be praised in the celestial kingdom.'¹⁵ And the process of teaching cannot be completed without a student. The student, thus, is a tool for the teacher to reach perfection. So if a teacher loves a student who is a tool for him – because this student has made his heart a fertile field ready for tilling – then this teacher loves his student for the sake of Allah.

We would go a step farther and say that if someone gathers a couple guests and prepares delicious food for them for the sake of Allah, and they love the cook because he is such a good cook, this is also love for the sake of Allah.

Similarly, if someone loves a person who has been charged with delivering charitable assistance to deserving recipients, this is also love for the sake of Allah.

Again, we would go a step farther and say that if someone employs someone to wash his clothes, sweep his house, or cook his food so he has free time for learning, doing good deeds, and worship – and he has employed this person for these specific reasons – then this is also love for the sake of Allah.

4. The fourth category is when someone loves someone for the sake of Allah and for no other reason – neither the acquisition of knowledge, nor the performance of good deeds, nor to reach anything other than His essence. This is the loftiest level of companionship; it is also the most intricate and the most mysterious.

Nonetheless, it is also a possibility. For when love overtakes someone, it extends from the beloved to everything concerning and related to the beloved, even distantly. When someone loves someone intensely, he also loves whoever else loves that person, as well as whoever else that person loves. He loves whoever serves his beloved, whoever praises his beloved, and whoever hastens to please his beloved.

Majnun said,¹⁶

As I pass through these dwellings, and near Layla's dwelling,

I kiss the walls here and there.

It is not love of these dwellings that has inflamed my heart,

But rather love of the one who resides within these dwellings.

Both observation and experience show that love transcends the beloved and extends to whatever is connected to it, albeit from afar. However, that is a characteristic of excessive love. Love itself is not sufficient for such a state. This has been fully elucidated in the chapter on love.

Thereafter, know that whoever loves for the sake of Allah must also hate for the sake of Allah. For if you love someone for the sake of Allah – because he is obedient to Allah, and because he is beloved to Allah – then if he disobeys Him, you must necessarily hate him because he is now disobedient to Allah and has become loathsome to Him. Love and hate are mutually connected. Each of them is buried deep in the heart, but they filter out through the actions of those who love and hate as they try to bring things closer or farther. If these feelings become manifest through deeds, they are called ‘allegiance’ or ‘enmity’.

It is narrated that Allah revealed to one of the prophets:

You were ascetic in this world, and comfort was quick to come. You severed yourself from everything but Me and became dear to Me. However, did you make enemies or friends for My sake?¹⁷

روى إن الله تعالى أوحى إلى نبي من الأنبياء، أما زهدك في الدنيا، فقد تعجلت الراحة، وأما انقطاعك إلي فقد تعزّزت بي، ولكن هل عادت في عدوّاً أو واليت في ولياً؟

Jesus (A) said,

‘Make yourselves beloved to Allah by hating those who disobey Him. Come nearer to Allah by distancing yourselves from them. Pursue the

pleasure of Allah by being displeased with them.'

They asked him, 'O Spirit of Allah, who should we sit with?'

He replied, 'Sit with the people who remind you of Allah when you see them, whose speech increases your knowledge, and whose deeds make you yearn for the Hereafter.'¹⁸

قال عيسى (ع): تحببوا إلى الله ببغض أهل المعاصي، وتقربوا إلى الله بالتباعد منهم، والتمسوا رضا الله بسخطهم، قالوا: يا روح الله من نجالس؟ قال: جالسوا من يذكركم الله رؤيته، ومن يزيد في علمكم كلامه؛ ومن يرغبكم في الآخرة عمله.

Types of brothers

Imam al-Baqir (A) said that a man in Basra came to the Commander of the Faithful and said, 'O Commander of the Faithful, tell me about brothers.' So he replied:

Brothers are of two types: brothers you can rely on, and brothers who smile outwardly.

Brothers you can rely on are like a hand, or a wing, or family, or wealth. If you rely on your brother, then sacrifice your wealth and body for his sake. Be sincerely loyal to those who are loyal to him, and be an enemy to those who oppose him. Conceal his secrets and faults. Spread the good things you know about him. Know that these people are rarer than the philosopher's stone.

You may like your brothers who smile outwardly, but you cannot be certain of them, and you do not know what is in their innermost consciousnesses. Grant them what they have granted you – be cheerful towards them, speak nicely to them, and smile as they smile – flashing their teeth.¹⁹

قام رجل بالبصرة إلى أمير المؤمنين (ع) فقال: يا أمير المؤمنين أخبرنا عن الإخوان، فقال (ع): الإخوان صنفان: إخوان الثقة، وإخوان المكاشرة. فأما إخوان الثقة فهم الكف والجناح والأهل والمال، وإذا كنت من أخيك على حد الثقة فابذل له مالك وبدنك، وصاف من صافاه وعاد من عاداه، وأكتم سرّه وعيبه وظهر منه الحسن، واعلم أيها السائل أنهم أقل من الكبريت الأحمر. وأما

إخوان المكاشرة فانك تصيب لذتك منهم فلا تقطعن ذلك منهم، ولا تطلبن ما وراء ذلك من ضميرهم، وابدل لهم ما بذلوا لك من طلاقة الوجه وحلاوة اللسان.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said that the Commander of the Faithful (A) said,

You do not have to befriend an intelligent person if his generosity is not praiseworthy. However, take advantage of his intellect and be wary of his foul etiquette. But do not fail to befriend a generous person. For even if you do not benefit from his intellect, your intellect will benefit from his generosity. And flee from a wretched fool [who has neither generosity nor intellect].²⁰

لا عليك أن تصحب ذا العقل، وإن لم يحمده كرمه، ولكن انتفع بعقله واحترس من سيء اخلاقه ولا تدعن صحبة الكريم فإن لم تنفع بكرمه بعقله، ولكن انتفع بكرمه بعقلك، وافرر كل الفرار من اللئيم الأحمق.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said,

Rely on the benefits of whatever you have, and be wary of new acquaintances who have kept no promise, no security, no immunity, and no pledge. Be cautious of those you rely on most, because people are enemies of [those who have] blessings.²¹

عليك بالتلاد، وإياك وكل محدث لاعهد له ولا أمان ولا ذمة ولا ميثاق، وكن على حذر من أوثق الناس في نفسك، فإن الناس أعداء النعم.



Friendship has its principles. Whenever someone observes these principles – at least to some extent – then you can call him a friend. But if someone does not observe any of these principles, then do not call him a friend at all.

First, his inner thoughts should match his behaviour towards you. Second, he should feel adorned when you are adorned, and shamed when you are shamed. Third, neither power nor wealth should change his attitude towards you. Fourth, he should not deny you anything which he can acquire for you. Fifth – and this is the sum

total of all these characteristics – he should not abandon you in times of need.²²

لا تكون الصداقة إلا بمحدودها، فمن كانت فيه هذا الحدود أو شيء منها فانسبه إلى الصداقة، ومن لم يكن فيه شيء منها، فلا تنسبه إلى شيء من الصداقة: فأولها: أن تكون سريره وعلايته لك واحدة، والثانية: أن يرى زينك وزينه وشينك شينه، والثالثة: أن لا تغيره عليك ولاية ولا مال، والرابعة: أن لا يمنعك شيئاً تناله مقدرته، والخامسة: وهي تجمع هذه الخصال أن لا يسلمك عند النكبات.

In *The Lantern of the Path*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

Three things are becoming scarcer in every era: a brother for the sake of Allah, a righteous wife as a companion in the religion of Allah, and a rightly guided son. Whoever acquires one of these three has attained the best of both realms and abundant prosperity in this world.

Beware of fraternising with someone who pursues you for the sake of greed, fear, failure, food, or drink. Seek instead the brotherhood of the God-conscious, even in the depths of the earth, and even if you exhaust your lifespan searching for them. For Allah has not created anyone better than the prophets on the face of the earth, and Allah has not blessed anyone with anything greater than the good fortune of being a companion to one of them. Allah says: 'Even the intimate friends, on that day, shall be foes to one another, except the God-conscious' (43:67).²³

قد قل ثلاثة أشياء في كل زمان: الإخاء في الله والزوجة الصالحة الليفة في دين الله والولد الرشيد، ومن أصاب أحد الثلاثة فقد أصاب خير الدارين والحظ الأوفر في الدنيا. واحذر أن تؤاخي من أدراكك لطمع أو خوف أو فشل أو أكل أو شرب، واطلب مؤاخاة الاتقياء، وفي ظلمات الأرض ولو أفتيت عمرك في طلبهم، فإن الله تعالى لم يخلق على وجه الأرض أفضل منهم بعد النبيين، وما أنعم الله على العبد بمثل ما أنعم به من التوفيق لصحبته، قال الله تعالى: ﴿الْأَخْيَاءَ يَوْمَئِذٍ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ إِلَّا الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾.

I believe that if anyone seeks a true friend in our age, he will hardly be blamed if he remains friendless. Do you

not see that the first honour that Allah bestowed upon His apostles, when they brought forth their message, was a trustworthy comrade or supporter? Allah has bestowed similar favours upon the sincere, the saints, and the trustworthy companions of the prophets. This shows that there is no blessing in either realm which is loftier, better, or purer than companionship and brotherhood for the sake of Allah.

Notes

¹ al-Nuri, *Mustadrak al-Wasa'il*, vol. 9, p. 151.

² al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 64, p. 309.

³ Ibid., vol. 72, p. 359.

⁴ A reference for this narration could not be found in the primary books of *hadith*.

⁵ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 9, p. 17.

⁶ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 73, p. 38.

⁷ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 16, p. 159.

⁸ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 71, p. 278.

⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 126.

¹⁰ Ibid. The last line refers to Qur'an 3:136 (et al.).

¹¹ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 16, p. 183.

¹² al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 128.

¹³ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 66, p. 250.

¹⁴ Ibid., vol. 6, p. 249.

¹⁵ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 38.

¹⁶ 'Majnun' literally means 'insane' or 'crazy'. It is, however, the name of a character, used in mystical poetry by several classical mystics, who was insanely in love with a woman, Layla. The relationship between the two is often used to describe the poet's own affection towards his beloved Lord.

¹⁷ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 9, p. 7.

¹⁸ A similar narration is related in Ibn 'Asakir, *Tarikh Madinat Dimishq*, vol. 47, p. 453.

¹⁹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 248.

²⁰ al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 12, p. 19.

²¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 8, p. 252.

²² al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 639.

²³ al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 71, p. 282.

❖ Epilogue ❖

In this book, we have mentioned secrets of the religion and of certain inner knowledge of the divine. We have alluded to secrets of our belief and explained praiseworthy and blameworthy manners and secrets of good and bad deeds.

Know that what we have mentioned and examined in these treatises and chapters can rarely be found in such a refined and systemised method in other books, even if the other books are also based on the same sources – the only sources that can be relied upon – namely, the Book of Allah, the Sunnah, and the narrations of the Household of the Prophet (S), not the opinions of people whom the devil whispers to, ‘he who whispers into the hearts of jinn and men’ (114:5).

Allah granted me the fortune of compiling and authoring it over the course of a few months in the year 1090 AH, at a time when my end was near. I was a little more than eighty-three years old, and bodily ailments which I had no hope of recovering from were disturbing my equanimity and my thoughts.

Allah also blessed me with the true ideology. He favoured me with loyalty to His saints and enmity towards His enemies – after he showed me who His friends and enemies were through His revelation to His

prophet, the prophetic mission, and aiding me and guiding me in submitting to Him.

One who is worthy of this compilation (and who is granted assistance from Allah) will benefit from it. This is a person of strong resolve who exerts his utmost efforts in achieving his desired goal. Otherwise, a lower person who puts forth limited effort and seeks only what is easily obtainable will benefit very little, as much as a single stalk of wheat on a giant threshing floor.

The likes of us – who say what they do not do, and who forget themselves when they tell others to do good – will benefit considerably from this book by becoming more aware of their shortcomings. They will loathe, humble, and rebuke themselves, broken and aware of their inner flaws. For true faith requires that the believing slave not be pleased with himself until His Master is pleased with him. As long as He is not satisfied, he will forever be filled with grief and regret, sadness and pain, hoping that Allah will reach out to him with His mercy and forgiveness, ‘for Allah is Forgiving and Merciful’ (2:226).

It is narrated,

A slave of Allah commits a sin but continuously fears and loathes himself because of it. Therefore, Allah has mercy upon him and brings him to Paradise.¹

العبد ليذنب الذنب فلا يزال منه خائفاً ماقتاً لنفسه، فيرجمه الله فيدخله الجنة.

A slave of Allah never escaped a sin without fleeing [to Allah]. However, confession is equal to penance. Whoever would commit a sin should know that Allah is aware of it. If He wills, He will punish him for it; and if He wills, He will forgive him for it – even if he does not ask for forgiveness.

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And whoever does an evil deed or oppresses himself, then asks Allah for forgiveness, shall find Allah forgiving and merciful. (4:110)

We seek Allah's forgiveness for every misstep or slip of the pen. We seek forgiveness for anything we have said that we have not done. We seek forgiveness for professing any knowledge or insight into the religion of Allah which we lack. We seek forgiveness for anything we learned or did to seek His gracious countenance, but with mixed intentions. We seek forgiveness for every promise we made to ourselves, but fell short of fulfilling. We seek forgiveness for every blessing which Allah bestowed upon us which we used to disobey Him. We seek forgiveness for every shortcoming which we mentioned, but which we possess. We seek forgiveness for any thought which inspired us to show off – either in writing, or in speech, or in knowledge that we learned or passed on.

Thereafter, we turn back to Him, after seeking forgiveness for all we have mentioned. We also ask that He bestow His forgiveness and mercy upon whoever reads, scribes, or hears this book, and overlook that person's ill deeds. For His kindness, mercy, and generosity encompass everything in creation; and we are part of His creation and have no means to approach Him save His grace and munificence.

The Messenger of Allah (S) said,

Allah's mercy is divided into a hundred parts. One part of His mercy has descended to the jinn, humankind, the birds, the cattle, and insects. Through it, they are amicable and merciful towards each other. Allah will bestow the other ninety-nine parts of His mercy upon His slaves on the Day of Resurrection.²

إن الله تعالى مائة رحمة، أنزل منها رحمة واحدة بين الجن والإنس والطير والبهائم والحوام، فيها

يتعاطفون وبها يتراجون، وآخر تسعاً وتسعين رحمة الله بما عباده يوم القيامة.

O Lord! Our hopes have been extinguished. Our condition has worsened. Tongues have lied, and promises have been broken – except for Your promise, for you have promised forgiveness and grace.

O Allah! Bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad. Grant me Your grace. Protect me from Satan the accursed. Glory and praise be to You! How great, lenient, and kind You are! Your kindness swaddles the insolence of the arrogant. Your blessings drown out the gratitude of the thankful. Your leniency cannot be calculated, and Your glory and might cannot be described.

What clemency You have shown, through Your grace, to someone You created from a single seed – and, before that, he was nothing! You nurtured him with goodly sustenance, showered him with blessing after blessing, established him in the cradle of Your earth, and called him to obey You. But he grew bold – he disobeyed You and worshipped others while living under Your sovereignty.

What would have happened, had You not kindly tolerated him, granting him respite, and embraced him with Your protection? You have honoured me in making me know You and inspired my tongue to thank You. You have guided me to the path of obeying You, opened the way to Your generosity, and put me on the road towards You. In return, I repaid Your kindness with offences, greedily rushing towards things which displease You and incur Your wrath. I hurried towards things which distance us from Your pleasure, exulting as I was deluded in farfetched hopes, undeterred by the reminder of death.

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Your clemency did not persuade me. Hence, You threatened to take my strength, until I implored you amidst my grave sins and begged You for Your blessings while unprepared to face Your wrath. I deemed You slow to give and found fault with Your abundant sustenance. In response to Your gifts, I did evil and expected Your mercy like those who do good, and I hoped for monumental things from You like someone free from the consequences of his misdeeds.

‘We belong to Allah, and to Him is our return’ (2:156). What a great calamity! Your punishment would overwhelm me, were it not for my hopes in You and Your promise to pardon my lapses. I have hope in Your absolution. I have acted audaciously against You, committing serious offences while hiding from the most insignificant of Your creation. I was not vigilant of You while You were with me; I did not respect the sanctity of Your protective covering over me. How should I meet you? How should I invoke You when I have violated my oath and violated the faith which I affirmed! I made You a guardian over me and called out to You with all my heart while I was at fault, and You responded to me. You called upon me – and I am the one in need of You – but I did not respond. Alas! What blameworthy evil! What an ugly deed! What impudent audacity! What deception has beguiled my soul!

Glory be to You! By You, I seek nearness to Yourself. I swear by You that I am fleeing from You towards You. My self, not Your self, made light of disobeying You. My ignorance, not Your knowledge, deceived me. I squandered my rights and did nothing to Yours. I wronged myself, hoped for Your mercy, believed in You, turned back to You, and humbled myself before You. So

have mercy upon My destitution before You, upon my indigence, upon my failure and falling upon my face, and upon my distress at my evil sins. Truly, You are the Most Merciful of the Merciful!

Notes

¹ al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 426.

² al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 6, p. 219.

❖ Glossary ❖

- 'adl* – justice, equity
āḥād – a *ḥadīth* which is not widely reported
ahl al-dhikr wa al-taṣawwuf – Sufis
ahl al-dunyā – worldly people
Akhbārī – a trend of thought relying on narrations in deducing religious legislation
'ālam al-mulk – the world of Kingdom
al-'Alīm – the Omniscient (an attribute of Allah)
'aql – intellect
'arīf – a mystic
awliyā' – friends (of Allah)
ayāt – signs (of God); verses of the Qur'an
bid'ah – unlawful innovation
birr – benefaction
al-bayt al-ma'mūr – the heavenly counterpart to the Ka'bah
ḍa'īf – weak, possibly inauthentic (*ḥadīth*)
dhikr – remembrance of Allah
du'ā – a spoken or inward prayer
dunyā – the world
fiqh – religious law
fitnah – dissention
fīṭrah – inner nature
ghaḍab – anger
ḥadīth – narration from or about the Prophet Muhammad (S), Fatimah al-Zahra (A), or the twelve Imams (A)
ḥadīth qudsī – a narration related in the words of Allah
ḥalāl – religiously permissible
ḥarām – religiously impermissible
ḥasan – acceptable (*ḥadīth*, a lower classification than *ṣaḥīḥ*)
hawā – whim
haybah – awe
al-ḥayy – the Ever-Living (an attribute of Allah)
'īd – holiday, 'Eid
'ilm – knowledge
'iṣmah – divine protection from sins
i'tikāf – spiritual retreat
iḥrām – the ritual garments for hajj; a sanctified state during hajj in which certain things, such as using perfume, are prohibited
ijāzah – scholarly authorization
ijāzat naql al-ḥadīth – authorization to narrate *ḥadīth*
ijmā' – scholarly consensus
ijtihād – the process of juristic deduction
iḥtiyāt – caution in a juristic ruling

- ilhām* – inspiration
imām – a divinely appointed leader (one of the twelve Imams); a prayer leader in a mosque
imān – faith
janābah – a condition of ritual impurity brought about by sexual activity
jihād – fighting ordained by the Prophet (S) or Imams (A); striving
khābar al-wāḥid – a *ḥadīth* which is not widely reported
kufr – infidelity
kunyah – patronymic
labbayk wa sa'adayk – 'Here I am, at Your service!' (called out during hajj)
laylat al-qadr – the Night of Decree
ma'rūf – good spending (such as on one's family)
makrūh – religiously discouraged
al-malakūt – the higher spiritual realm
mashhūr – a *ḥadīth* narrated through several narrators (lit. 'famous')
mubāh – something which is neither religiously prohibited or required; netural
muḥaddith – a scholar of *ḥadīth*
muḥkamāt – Qur'anic verses with obvious meanings
mujtahid – a scholar who deduces religious law
al-Mun'im – the Bestower of Blessings (an attribute of Allah)
murūwwah – chivalry, manliness, honourable conduct
al-murīd – the One who Wills (a description of Allah)
mustafīd – a *ḥadīth* narrated through several narrators
al-mutakallim – the One who Speaks (a description of Allah); theologian
mutashabihāt – metaphorical verses of the Qur'an
mutawātir – a *ḥadīth* which is widely reported
muwaththaq – reliable (*ḥadīth*)
al-nafs al-lawwāmah – the self-reproaching soul
al-nafs al-muṭama'innah – the serene soul
al-rūḥ – the Spirit
qalb – heart
qiblah – the direction of Mecca
al-Qadīr – the Omnipotent (an attribute of Allah)
qiyām – standing in prayer
qiyās – analogy
quwwah – faculty
ramy – throwing pebbles at the pillars (symbolizing Satan) during hajj
riḍā – satisfaction (of Allah)
rukū' – bowing in prayer
sa'ī – repeated journey between Safa and Marwah
ṣadaqah – charity
ṣaḥīḥ – authentic (*ḥadīth*)
salām – greeting of peace
ṣalāt – ritual prayer, blessings
ṣalāt al-layl – pre-dawn prayers
shahwah – desire
shayṭān – Satan, a devil
shirk – polytheism
ṣiddīq – honest, veracious
ṣidq – truthfulness, veracity
al-ṣifāt wa al-asmā' – the attributes and names (of Allah)
ṣirāt – a bridge in the Hereafter; a

GLOSSARY

- bridge
siwāk – a type of twig used for brushing the teeth
 Sunnah – the sayings and practice of the Prophet Muhammad (S)
al-ta'arrub ba'd al-hijrah – abandoning the faith
ta'wīl – esoteric interpretation (of the Qur'an)
tafsīr – Qur'anic exegesis
tafsīr bi al-ra'y – judging or interpreting Qur'an by personal opinion
takbīr – saying 'Allah is the greatest'
takhyīr – juristic options
taqiyyah – dissimulation
tartīl – a form of Qur'anic recitation
tashahhud – bearing witness to divine unity in prayer
taslīm – the latter portion of the prayer in which greetings are sent upon the Prophet (S), submission
ṭawāf – circling the Holy Ka'bah
tawātur – the status of a ḥadīth being widely reported
tawfīq – divine blessing
tawḥīd – divine unity, monotheism
tayammum – ritual purification using dust or earth
al-thaqalayn – the 'two weighty things' (the Book of Allah and the Prophet's descendants)
'ulamā' – those with knowledge; religious scholars
'ulūm al-naqliyyah – transmitted knowledge
ummah – the religious community of the Prophet Muhammad (S)
uṣūl al-fiqh – principles of jurisprudence
 Uṣūlī – a trend of thought utilizing juristic principles in deducing religious legislation
wājib – religiously required
waswasah – satanic insinuation
wilāyah – divinely appointed authority
wuḍū' – ritual ablution
wujūb kifā'ī – communal obligation
zakāt – alms tax

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